

THE RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS / BECOMING CATHOLIC

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A journey of faith that takes as long as it takes! Can begin at any time.

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is the normal way for unbaptized persons and those who have been baptized in another Christian tradition to become a Catholic, through a process of discerning and ritualizing the stages of gradual conversion. The rite of Christian initiation is designed for adults (and children of catechetical age) who, after hearing the mystery of Christ proclaimed, consciously and freely seek the living God and enter the way of faith and conversion as the Holy Spirit opens their hearts. By God's help they will be strengthened spiritually during their preparation and at the proper time will receive the sacraments fruitfully. (RCIA Introduction, 1)

For the **Unbaptized**, the RCIA gradually uncovers the story of God's salvation for all; the mystery of Jesus' life, death and resurrection; and the workings of the Holy Spirit as revealed in the beliefs, sacramental life and spiritual practices of the Catholic Church. The initiation of catechumens is a gradual process that takes place within the community of the faithful and in accordance with the Church's liturgical year. Together with the catechumens, the faithful reflect upon the value of the paschal mystery, renew their own conversion, and by their example lead the catechumens to obey the Holy Spirit more generously. (#4) The process normally takes at least a year, with the three sacraments of initiation - Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist - received at the Easter Vigil.

For **Baptized Christians** who seek full communion with the Catholic Church, the RCIA includes a period of formation in Catholic belief, rites and pastoral practice. (RCIA Part II: sections 4 and 5). The process takes only as long as necessary, may be similar in some ways to that of the Unbaptized persons, but is different in that it is not Easter-focused.

For **Baptized Catholics** who have received no other faith formation and have not received the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist, the RCIA mentions pastoral practices to become a fully initiated Catholic (RCIA Part II, section 4). They may follow a process similar to that of other Christians.

Baptized Catholics who have already received Holy Communion will be in a different sacramental program geared to the reception of Confirmation. They will not be part of the RCIA.

Resources:

[Sorting It All Out: Children and Adults in the Initiation Process](#)

To help you recognize who is who, what process is needed, who does what, and where is it recorded, read the stories and scenarios that follow.

[Stages and Rituals for Unbaptized Adults](#)

There are four stages as well as rituals that mark these stages for persons who are not baptized. What follows outlines these stages.

[Stages and Rituals for Baptized Christians](#)

There are four similar periods and different rituals for baptized Christians, and uncatechized Catholics who have had no formation and have received neither Confirmation nor Eucharist. See the attached outline.

[Glossary](#)

Are you confused by some of the terms, names, objects, rites, etc. used in the RCIA process? Here's a glossary that might help. We'll keep expanding it as we go.