

RCIA “Glossary”



Advent	The period of four weeks prior to Christmas. It is a time of preparation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ and a reminder that we are also supposed to prepare for His second coming at the end of time.
Candidate	One who is already baptized in another Christian faith and who is now preparing to be received into the Catholic Church through Profession of Faith, Eucharist and Confirmation.
Catechumen	An unbaptized person who has entered into the Catechumenate Phase of the RCIA to prepare for the Sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation in the Catholic Church.
Catechumenate	The second stage of the RCIA process. This is a period of study about the Catholic Faith with an added emphasis on Scripture discussion and the Mass. Part of class involves attending Mass together and after the Homily, dismissing back to the classroom to study the scripture of the day and continue learning about the Catholic faith.
Catholic	A member of the Roman Catholic or Eastern Rite Church. Catholics are Christians—believers in Christ and the Trinity!
catholic	Catholic with the lower-case ‘c’ means universal.
Consecration	Making something sacred. It describes the moment during Mass when the bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ.
Diocese	The area under the care of a Bishop. It is made up of several parishes.
Easter Season	A period of seven weeks beginning with Easter Sunday and ending with the Feast of Pentecost. (50 days of celebrating Christ’s resurrection from the dead!)
Easter Vigil	The Mass on Holy Saturday evening where we remember and celebrate God’s plan of salvation and saving power through Christ’s resurrection from the dead. This is the one time of the year adults who desire baptism in the Catholic Church are baptized. The other sacraments of initiation are celebrated this evening as well.
Elect	The title given to a Catechumen after participating in the Rite of Election with the Bishop, signifying their being chosen by God to receive Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation at the Easter Vigil.
Genuflect	An action of kneeling down on one knee as a sign of honor and worship to Jesus Christ, expressing the belief of His presence in the tabernacle under the form of bread. Catholics genuflect when entering and leaving a Catholic Church.
Good Friday	The day on which the Crucifixion of Jesus is commemorated. It is a day of special solemnity for Catholics.
Gospel	The ‘good news’ of Jesus Christ’s saving power against death and sin. The four written Gospels are Matthew, Mark, Luke and John in the bible.
Holy Thursday	The day before Good Friday. On this day, Catholics commemorate the Last Supper Jesus had with his disciples the night before he died.
Holy Saturday	The day between Good Friday and Easter Sunday. It is a day we remember the disciples waiting in the upper room prior to Christ’s resurrection from the dead. The evening of Holy Saturday begins the celebration of Christ’s resurrection with the Easter Vigil Mass.

Holy Water	Water which has been blessed by a priest. Catholics bless themselves with holy water as they make the sign of the Cross upon entering a church as a reminder of their baptism. Holy water is also used for blessings.
Holy Week	The final week of Lent, leading up to Easter Sunday. The last three days of Holy Week (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday) are of special solemnity.
Homily	The reflection given by a priest or deacon which explains the readings from scripture of the day and corresponds day-to-day life and lessons from that particular scripture.
Host	The wafer of consecrated bread which Catholics receive at Holy Communion. It is usually flat and circular in shape for convenience.
Inquirer	Those who are wondering about the Catholic faith. Some decide to join the Inquiry phase of RCIA where they begin to learn about what Catholics believe.
Inquiry Phase	The first stage in the RCIA process. This is a period of learning the basics about the Catholic faith in order to decide whether one would like to continue forward & become Catholic or not. This phase is confidential.
Lent	The six week period extending from Ash Wednesday to sundown on Holy Thursday. This is a 40 day 'retreat' time for the church in preparation for our biggest celebration of our church calendar: the Triduum. This also corresponds to the Period of Enlightenment and Purification for RCIA elect and candidates in preparation for entering the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil.
Liturgical Cycle	Catholics use a cycle of readings from the bible so no matter where you are in the world, the same readings are used in every Catholic Church on that given weekend. We have a three-year cycle. Cycle A (Matthew), B (Mark), & C (Luke). The Gospel of John is interspersed throughout all three years.
Liturgical Year	The seasons and cycles of the Christian year.
Liturgy	The public worship of the Catholic Church. Also known as the Mass.
Magisterium	The teaching authority of the Church.
Mystagogy	The final stage in the RCIA process which extends from Easter until Pentecost. This allows those who recently entered the Catholic Church to learn how to assimilate their experience of RCIA into their future lives as Catholic Christians.
Mystery	A truth that cannot be grasped fully by human reason.
Neophyte	A new Catholic; one who has been received into the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil. The term comes from the Greek word meaning new plant.
Ordinary Time	The 'ordered time' (counted) between our major liturgical seasons (like Easter, Lent, Christmas, & Advent). This is a time where the church focuses on the meaning of God's gift to us in Jesus Christ, and how we can grow in our relationship with God through prayer, and service.
Palm Sunday	The Sunday before Easter. It commemorates the occasion when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey and people waved palm branches in his honor. Also known as "Passion Sunday".



Parables	The stories Jesus told which illustrate some of his most important teachings.
Parish	The community of the Church in a particular location.
Parish Mission	A period of spiritual renewal within a parish, usually conducted by a visiting speaker.
Pentecost	The day when the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles fifty days after the resurrection of Jesus. Yearly we celebrate this as the 'birthday of the church'! Pentecost literally means 'fifty days'.
Period of Purification and Enlightenment	The third stage of the RCIA process which begins the First Sunday of Lent. This is a time of more intense study and prayer as the candidate and elect prepare to be received into the Catholic Church.
RCIA	Acronym for the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. It is the process a person enters to learn more about the Catholic faith and experience what being Catholic is about, with the potential of receiving the Catholic Sacraments of Initiation.
Rite	A special ceremony which occurs at a Catholic Church to signify an important event or step in one's faith journey.
Rite of Acceptance	The ceremony that someone who is unbaptized goes through which bridges the Inquiry Phase & Catechumenate Phase of RCIA. Often combined with the Rite of Welcome.
Rite of Election	The ceremony in which the Bishop recognizes and 'elects' those unbaptized to be chosen for baptism at the Easter Vigil. The corresponding Rite for candidates is called the 'Call to Continuing Conversion'. These Rites are often celebrated together in one ceremony. This is the bridge between the Period of the Catechumenate and the Period of Purification and Enlightenment.
Rite of Sending	The ceremony that occurs before the Rite of Election in which the catechumens sign their names in the Book of Elect, as a sign of their readiness and willingness to be baptized.
Rite of Scrutiny	The three ceremonies which occur during the third, fourth and fifth Sundays of Lent to prepare the elect for baptism. Though this Rite is only for those preparing for Baptism, it is a time for all of us with them to reflect on what things in our lives that get in the way of our relationship with God and strive to make changes for the better.
Rite of Welcome	The ceremony that someone who is already baptized goes through which bridges the Inquiry Phase & Catechumenate Phase of RCIA. Often combined with the Rite of Acceptance.
Sacrament	A special way to encounter God. In the Catholic Church there are 7 Sacraments, each having its own associated signs and symbols.
Tabernacle	The place (usually a fancy box) in which the consecrated hosts are kept.
Triduum	The "three days" of the celebration of Christ's suffering, death and resurrection. It begins on sundown on Holy Thursday and ends with evening prayer on Easter Sunday evening. This is our highest feast of the Church calendar. One liturgy is celebrated over three days. The Holy Saturday evening celebration is when RCIA candidates and elect are received into the Catholic Church.

