



The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (commonly known as the RCIA) is the normal way in which adults become fully active, participating members of the Catholic Church. It is a community journey and a personal journey. It involves the whole parish in prayer, in hospitality as new members are welcomed, and in specific ministry as team members, sponsors and catechists. The RCIA helps adults grow in their relationship with God, grow in their understanding of Catholic teachings and practices, get acquainted with people in the parish and get involved in service with the parish or the wider community.

The RCIA is for three groups of people:

1. Those who are not baptized.
2. Those who were baptized into another Christian denomination and wish to enter into full communion with the Catholic Church.
3. Baptized Catholics who were never formed in the Catholic faith and have not completed their initiation; that is, who have received neither of the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist.

The RCIA consists of four periods of formation which are marked by rituals that celebrate what has been completed and call a person into the next phase. There is no specific length of time for each period. The RCIA is a journey that "takes as long as it takes," according to each individual.

Many who want to join the Catholic Church have already been baptized in another Christian Church. They will not be rebaptized, but will follow the steps adapted to the particular needs of Christians from another faith.

First Step: Period of Inquiry (Evangelization)

How one comes to consider joining the Catholic Church is unique to each individual. Years of marriage to a Catholic, conversations with a Catholic friend, or even something written or viewed in the media can move an adult toward membership in the Catholic Church. At some point, the person may contact a Catholic parish and begin to meet with other adults who are also inquiring about the Catholic faith. These adults, with members of the RCIA team, will take time to tell their own stories and connect them with the faith stories found in scripture.

Second Step: Period of Teaching (Catechumenate)

Some of the Inquirers become firm in their desire for initiation and decide that they would like to begin more formal study of the teachings and practices of the Catholic Church. They enter into the next step through a special ceremony called the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens, where the Church symbolically claims these men and women for Christ by signing them with the cross.

Third Step: Rite of Election and Period of Purification and Enlightenment

The period of the Catechumenate ends when the catechumens discern, with the help of their sponsors and RCIA team, that God is calling them to receive the sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and first Eucharist) at the Easter Vigil. Before they can be initiated they must be officially called to the sacraments by

the bishop or someone designated by him. This Rite of Election, which marks the end of the normal study of the teachings and practices of the Church, is celebrated on the first Sunday of Lent in the cathedral. The catechumens are now called the elect. The weeks of Lent are a time of intense prayer as the elect prepare themselves to celebrate the resurrection at Easter and to receive the sacraments of initiation.

Fourth Step: Initiation and Mystagoga

A period of 50 days from Easter to Pentecost completes the initiation process. It is a time of the newly received to find a place in the community.