

RCIA FAQ's 2020-2021

St. Gerard Parish



1. How long are RCIA classes and when are they scheduled?

Our classes for 2020-2021 will be held both in-person and via Zoom on Sunday mornings at 10:30am beginning September 27th. Initially, classes will run until about noon. As time goes on, we will eventually attend mass together as part of our class time, so expect an added hour. Though every person's journey is different and can vary in length depending on various circumstances, most commonly people are received into the Catholic Church the evening before Easter (at the Easter Vigil Mass). The process continues on with follow-up classes until the feast of Pentecost (50 days after Easter). If you do not fit the traditional "Easter Vigil" model, we can receive you into the church at any Mass throughout the year, whenever you are ready.

2. Why does it take so long to become Catholic?

Joining the Catholic Church is a major life decision! The process is lengthy (from 8-12 months/+) in part because there is a lot of information to learn, but more importantly, because joining the Catholic faith encompasses your whole self—not just mind, but heart too. We hope by the end of the process you are not just receiving the title of Catholic, but an entire way of life; that you are a different person than you were when it began and living out what you just learned! Important, life-changing events like this take time; and even when class is over, your formation as a Catholic is not over, but rather it is a life-long process of growing in relationship with Christ.

3. Is there a cost to take the class?

There is no cost to take this class. If you've enjoyed the experience so much that you decide to give back through your time and talent after classes are finished, you are encouraged to do so!

4. What if I have children that would like to become Catholic too? Do they join me in class?

Children under the age of 18 are not allowed in the classroom. This allows for free question asking and discussion without having to worry about younger children in the room. We have separate, age-specific classes for teens and younger children. Please contact Jeff Corder at youth@stgerard.org or Kathy Warriner at kwarriner@stgerard.org for more information. Unfortunately due to COVID restrictions, we are unable to provide childcare at the church at this time.

5. Are there tests or things to memorize in RCIA class?

There are no tests and no required memorization. There are some prayers you may want to learn, like the Lord's Prayer and the Nicene Creed but there will not be any tests regarding this kind of thing. There is usually a short amount of reading to prepare for the upcoming class and sometimes handouts to review. Like most things in life, what you put into RCIA class is what you will get out of it.



6. If I'm already baptized, do I get baptized again when I join the Catholic Church?

In the Catholic Church, we believe that there is only one baptism and this was formulated by Jesus Christ himself (see Matthew 28:19). A valid baptism has the following formula: "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" as water is poured over the individual or the individual is immersed under water. Most mainstream Christian denominations use this form, and therefore these baptisms are recognized. In this case, you would make a 'Profession of Faith' in the Catholic Church prior to receiving your First Holy Communion and Confirmation as a Catholic. We do not re-baptize. For some faiths that do not use the above formula, the baptism would not be recognized; therefore, you would receive Baptism as part of joining the Catholic Church. If you have more questions regarding which denomination's baptisms are recognized, please discuss with the RCIA Director upon registration. We will need proof of your baptism via a certificate or letter from the church. If a certificate is not available, a witness to the baptism can fill out an affidavit form stating that the baptism did in fact occur.

7. If I start RCIA class, does it mean I *have* to become Catholic?

No, not at all! This is YOUR journey—we are helping you along the way. We invite you to check Catholicism out by starting classes, but you can walk away at any time if you feel this is not for you. If you have questions about a particular subject and are not comfortable bringing it up in class, please do not hesitate to check in with a team member after class or set up an appointment.

8. What if my family is against my decision to become Catholic?

Unfortunately, this kind of thing does happen. Many times it stems from misunderstandings of some of our teachings. Hopefully as you come to learn what the Church teaches, you can help your family members have a better understanding, too. But, Jesus Himself said that we would not be immune to roadblocks and tough paths along the way of following Him. Know that He is with you on this journey. Pray for those who persecute you. Ultimately, this is your decision, so do not let others hinder you on the journey you believe God has called you to undertake.

9. Why do I have to wait to receive communion until I'm Catholic?

Catholics believe that Communion, or the Holy Eucharist, is the actual Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. When Catholics receive Communion, we are not only saying 'yes' ("Amen") to this fact, but also we are saying yes to our unity with the Catholic Church in belief of the doctrines, laws and authority of the Church leaders. When a person joins the Catholic Church through Baptism or making a Profession of Faith, he or she is publically proclaiming unity in belief of our doctrines. It is only then that he or she is really saying the same 'yes' and can thus receive Eucharist. It's not about being worthy or not; it's about being in communion with the people and beliefs of the Catholic Church.