



Interested in becoming Catholic?

- Have you been attending Mass, but never taken the step to become Catholic?
- Were you Baptized Catholic as a child but never received the other Sacraments of Initiation (Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation) and would like to receive those Sacraments now?
- Were you Baptized in another Christian faith and would like to find out more about the Catholic Church and receiving the Sacraments?
- Do you know friends or family who might be interested in learning about becoming a Catholic Christian?

If any of these questions apply to you, OCIA is for you!

The Order of Christian Initiation for Adults (OCIA) is the process through which unbaptized adults can become Catholic. We also welcome baptized Christian adults (age 16 and over) who are considering joining the Church and those Catholics who are not yet Confirmed to join us to prepare to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Participants attend classes to learn about the Catholic faith and gain an understanding of Catholic beliefs and practices.

Participants don't have to make a commitment to become Catholic to join our classes. The Journey of Faith is different for each of us; we simply want to share what the Catholic Church has to offer.

Our OCIA classes are for the following seekers:

1. **Adults with Little or No Christian Background**

- Many adults who wish to join the Catholic Church have **never been baptized**. The Church offers unbaptized adults a process of formation in the Catholic Christian faith and way of life called Christian Initiation, or catechumenate. Christian Initiation is a gradual process; it begins somewhat informally. After you contact us, you will be invited to meet with other people who are exploring the possibility of becoming Catholic. **No commitments are made or expected during this time**.
- If you decide to pursue the process of becoming Catholic, you will enter the catechumenate; **an unbaptized person in the catechumenate is called a catechumen**. The OCIA Classes provide a structure for the proclamation of the gospel; catechesis (passing on the teachings of the Church); public and private prayer; the observance of the feasts, fasts, Sundays and seasons of the Church calendar; direct contact with members of the parish community and participation in the work of the Church for justice and peace. Our goal is that each catechumen be paired with a sponsor who can serve as a companion and offer support and encouragement.
- Though the various rites of the catechumenate, the Church marks your journey to full membership. These rites reflect your spiritual growth and the community's loving concern. The climax of the catechumenate process is the celebration of the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil, followed by a period for reflection and integration into the life and mission of the Church. From the time an

unbaptized person becomes a catechumen until that person celebrates the sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist) usually takes about a year.

2. **Baptized Adults Who Are Not Active Christians:** Adults who were baptized in a Christian faith, but who have never been formed in the Christian life also participate the catechumenate process. As they prepare for acceptance into the Catholic Church, they are known as **candidates** rather than catechumens. Even though the process is the same, the Catholic Church takes care to respect the fact that these people are already baptized.
3. **Baptized Adults Who Are Active Christians**
 - Adults who have been active members of other Christian denominations seek membership in the Catholic Church for many reasons. A person who has been an active Christian and who has actively participated in the worship and life of a Christian community can bring a lot to the (OCIA) Order of Christian Initiation for Adults process.
 - At Sacred Heart, like most Catholic Parishes, we use the OCIA program as a starting point for these Christians to join the Catholic Church. We provide an understanding of Catholic beliefs, the experience of participating in the Church's liturgical life over an appropriate period of time and an acquaintance with the Catholic community to be able to make a lasting commitment to the Catholic Church.
4. **Children:** Will participate in a separate program based upon their age and baptismal status. Contact the OCIA coordinator for specifics.

The Process and Periods of Christian Initiation (for the unbaptized)

- **Period of Inquiry:** This is a time of introduction to the gospel of Jesus Christ and a time of reflection on one's own life in the light of the values of the reign of God. It is an unstructured time of no fixed duration for questions and an opportunity of the beginnings of Christian faith to form.
- **Rite of Acceptance** into the Order of Catechumens. In this liturgical rite, those who wish to become catechumens publicly express their desire to follow the way of Jesus. The Church accepts their intention and welcomes them into the household of Faith as catechumens.
- **Period of the Catechumenate:** Along with the whole community, catechumens celebrate the liturgy of the word at Mass each Sunday. The catechumens and their catechists (teachers) continue to study and ponder the Scriptures and the teachings of the Church. During this time, catechumens receive anointings, participate in prayers of exorcism and blessing, and take part in the mission of the Church to the world. Through prayer, learning and coming to know other Catholic Christians, catechumens discover the love and power of God in their lives and in the Church.
- **Election or Enrollment of Names:** At this liturgical rite, usually celebrated on the First Sunday of Lent in the cathedral of the diocese, the bishop formally acknowledges the readiness of the catechumens and calls them to the sacraments of initiation. The catechumens respond by expressing their desire for these sacraments. From this time, until they are baptized, they are called **the elect**.
- **Period of Purification and Enlightenment:** This time of intense preparation for initiation usually coincides with Lent. During this period, the elect and the parish community together focus on conversion, scrutinize their lives in light of the gospel and celebrate the presentations of the Creed and Lord's Prayer.
 - **Sacraments of Initiation:** The elect become full members of the Body of Christ, the Church, through the celebration of the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil. From this time until the end of the period of mystagogy, they are known as neophytes, "new sprouts."