

ORDER OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS



Each year on Holy Saturday during the Easter Vigil, thousands are baptized into the Catholic Church in the United States. Parishes welcome these new Catholics through the *Order of Christian Initiation of Adults*. Listed below are some questions and answers about the process of Christian Initiation.

What are the steps of Christian Initiation?

Prior to beginning the process of becoming a Christian, an individual comes to some knowledge of Jesus Christ, considers his or her relationship with Jesus Christ and is usually attracted in some way to the Catholic Church. This period is known as the **Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate**. For some, this process involves a long period of searching; for others, a shorter time. Often, contact with people of faith and a personal faith experience lead people to inquire about the Catholic Church. After a conversation with a priest or a parish director of Christian Initiation, the person, known as an "inquirer," may seek acceptance into the Order of Catechumens, through the Rite for Entrance. During this Rite, the inquirer stands amidst the parish community and states that he or she wants to become a baptized member of the Catholic Church. The parish assembly affirms this desire and the inquirer becomes a Catechumen.

The **Period of the Catechumenate** depends on how the person is growing in faith, what questions they encounter along the way, and how God leads them on this journey. During this time, the Catechumens consider what God is saying to them in the Scriptures, what changes in their life they need to make to respond to God's inspiration, and what Baptism in the Catholic Church means. When a Catechumen and the priest and the parish team working with him or her believes the person is ready to make a faith commitment to Jesus in the Catholic Church, the next step is the request for baptism and the celebration of the Rite of Election. Even before the Catechumens are baptized, they have a special relationship to the Church.

What is meant by reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church?

Reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church describes the process for entrance into the Catholic Church for already baptized Christians. In most cases, these individuals make a profession of faith but are not baptized again. To prepare for this reception, the people, who are called Candidates, usually participate in a formation program to help them understand and experience the teachings and practices of the Catholic Church.

Although some preparation may be with Catechumens preparing for baptism, the preparation for Candidates is different since they have already been baptized and committed to Jesus Christ, and many have also been active members of other Christian communities. The Candidates may be received into the Catholic Church on a Sunday during the year or even at the Easter Vigil depending on pastoral circumstances and the readiness of the Candidate.

Have you ever thought about becoming a Catholic?

The Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (or OCIA) is the way that the Catholic church initiates new members into the Christian way of life, specifically in the Roman Catholic tradition. OCIA is a reestablishment of the ancient catechumenate, which existed in the early church (second to fifth centuries).

In the second half of the twentieth century, the Catholic Church developed a set of documents that defined the rites that local churches should use in the restored catechumenate. The OCIA process we use at St Patrick's is based on these Orders of Initiation.

Are You a Catechumen or candidate?

1. The OCIA process makes a distinction between a **catechumen** (an unbaptized person) and a **candidate** (a person who is already baptized in another Christian faith). The RCIA process is designed primarily for unbaptized people, but the Rite has been adapted for people baptized in other Christian traditions.
2. **Catholic preparing for Confirmation and Eucharist:** What about baptized Catholic adults who haven't received the sacraments of Confirmation or Eucharist? In recent years, the Diocese of Manchester recognized the needs of this group by including them in the OCIA process. Baptized Catholics preparing for these sacraments follow the **candidate** process.
3. **Confirmation of Baptized Adult:** Attend 4-6 week Catechetical preparation at the Diocese of Manchester. Adult Confirmations are celebrated at St. Joseph's Cathedral by the Bishop in the Spring & Fall of each year.

Summary of the OCIA process

- The Rite includes four phases:
- Evangelization and Precatechumenate (or Inquiry) phase
- Catechumenate or catechesis (learning) phase
- Purification and enlightenment or preparation phase
- Mystagogy or reflective phase

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