

Becoming Catholic

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

Welcome! Are you thinking of becoming Catholic? Would you like to know about the process of becoming Catholic?

The Diocese of Albany would like to assist you in your search for answers to questions you may have about becoming Catholic.

What made you decide to seek information on becoming Catholic?

Perhaps you are married to a Catholic....or you have many friends who are Catholic....or you just feel something is missing in your life. Perhaps you have a desire to know Jesus Christ more fully.... or to experience the Sacraments of the Church. *There are many ways that God calls a person into relationship with Jesus Christ and the Church and we are happy to help you in this journey!*



The Process...

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is a process through which a person gradually deepens his/her personal relationship with Jesus Christ and learns to live as a disciple with the Catholic community. The RCIA emphasizes personal conversion and commitment to live the Catholic Christian way of life.

You may be wondering...is the RCIA process for me?

The RCIA process is for three groups of people:

- Those who are not baptized (known as "catechumens")
- Those who were baptized in another Christian denomination and want to enter into full communion with the Catholic Church
- Baptized Catholics who have not been formed in the faith and have not completed their initiation through the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist.

The latter two groups are known as "candidates".

The RCIA has four “stages” of formation. They are:

- ❖ Pre-Catechumenate (also known as Inquiry)
- ❖ Catechumenate
- ❖ Purification and Enlightenment
- ❖ Mystagogy

Pre-Catechumenate (also referred to as Inquiry)

During this period, “inquirers” can receive answers to some of their most pressing questions about the Catholic faith and discern how this faith might connect with their personal story and their desire for a closer relationship with Jesus Christ and the Christian community. There is no time limit to this period. When ready, inquirers are invited to continue the journey through participation in the ritual called the *Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens* (for unbaptized) or the *Rite of Welcoming the Candidates* (optional, for baptized).

Catechumenate

This is the second period of preparation. This stage varies in length according to each person’s needs, but for the catechumen it lasts at least one full year. Catechumens (those preparing for baptism) and candidates (those already baptized, preparing to join the Catholic Church), will spend time being introduced to Catholic beliefs and way of life. The Scriptures and Catholic teachings will guide them, while participation in various forms of worship, prayer and parish activities will help integrate them into the Catholic Christian lifestyle. A sponsor will be chosen to provide individual support, and the parish community will continue to welcome them and pray for them. This stage culminates in the celebration of the *Rite of Election*, where catechumens are officially accepted for the Easter Sacraments (Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist), and are now called “elect”. Baptized candidates participate in the *Call to Continuing Conversion*.

Purification and Enlightenment

This period, which coincides with the season of Lent, is a time of final preparation for initiation. Lent is ordinarily that time for all to turn from sin and be enlightened by Christ. During this time, the Elect, engage in prayer and reflection about their growing relationship with Christ and the Church. They discern how they will live out that relationship in their everyday lives. The centerpiece of this period of prayerful preparation is the celebration of rites called *Scrutinies*. This period climaxes with the celebration of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist at the parish Easter Vigil liturgy on the night before Easter.

Mystagogy

Mystagogy means “leading into the mysteries”. This final period lasts from Easter Sunday until the completion of the Easter season, which is 50 days later on Pentecost Sunday. It is a time when the newly initiated reflect on that which they have just experienced and begin their lifelong pilgrimage of growth as the mysteries of their faith unfold.

The mission of the Church is to lead people to respond to God as best they can. Through the RCIA process, we try to help people do just that, not just for the moment of Baptism, but for every day of their lives.

Want to find out more?

Contact the Catholic Church in your area and let them know you are interested in exploring becoming Catholic. If you are not sure which parishes are in your area, go to the Diocese of Albany's website, www.rcda.org and click on "Parishes" in the banner. This will give you a list of Catholic Churches by county.

If you would like some more information, but are not quite ready to contact a Church, you may contact the Office of Prayer and Worship at prayer&worship@rcda.org or 518-453-6645, or Joyce Solimini at the Office of Lay Ministry and Parish Faith Formation at 518-453-6670 or joyce.solimini@rcda.org