

Frequently Asked Questions About RCIA

At this time I have no intention of joining the Church but I do want to learn more about Catholicism. Is there a place for me in the RCIA process?

Yes, the Inquiry group is for you. These weekly sessions provide you an opportunity to ask your questions and share with others in a relaxed environment. We all learn from one another and from our journey to know God better. There is no expectation for one to proceed from the Inquiry group into preparing to join the Church in the Catechumenate unless one asks to do so.

I know that I want to join the Catholic Church. Where do I begin?

This depends on you and where you are on your faith journey. If you are fairly new to Catholicism or have limited experience with the Christian faith, you may still find it helpful to being in the Inquiry group for a time before moving into the Catechumenate gathering. Each person's journey is unique and the RCIA Team will assist you in utilizing the RCIA process at St. Augustin so that your journey is fruitful and fulfilling.

Once I have decided to join the Catholic Church, why might it take a year or more? That seems like a long time.

When someone comes forward with an interest in joining the Catholic Church, that interest is then to be joined with knowledge about the Church's traditions and teachings, as well as a sufficient experience of the Catholic faith community. Joining the Catholic Church is not about passing a test on Catholicism; rather it is about learning and living the Gospel of Jesus in the context of the parish and wider Catholic community. In other words, it's not about what you know, it's about **Who** you know.

Adult baptisms are celebrated each year at the Easter Vigil (the Saturday night before Easter Sunday), which occurs each year in the Spring. If one comes to the parish in December with a desire to

be baptized and to join the Church, the following Easter would only be approximately 4 months away. This is not considered sufficient time for someone to experience the fullness of the Catholic faith Church and community. This "December seeker" would be welcomed into the RCIA process, would journey with a fellow group of seekers each week, and would most likely be baptized and initiated into the Catholic Church approximately 16 months later. If one comes to the parish in September having made a decision to join the church, depending on the level of preparation needed, that person may be deemed ready to be initiated into the church at the following Easter.

The goal in joining the Catholic Church is not to be baptized, although the Sacrament of Baptism is a priceless gift from God. The goal is to grow in your love and awareness of God, to begin or build on your relationship with Jesus Christ, and to learn how the Catholic faith community lives out this call. Baptism is part of the journey but not a finish line to sprint towards. Joining the Church is a process of shaping our hearts, minds, and spirits so they look more like God's. The rich exploration of faith is not a race, but a journey to be savored, reflected upon, and celebrated.

I am not baptized and am getting married to a Catholic. I wanted to join the Church before our wedding. Is that possible?

Remember, the goal is not baptism or even joining the Church. The goal is learning and living within the context of the faith community, which allows us to fully live out the Gospel of Jesus Christ as celebrated in the Catholic Church. If your wedding is not yet scheduled, you are invited to talk over this timetable with a member of the RCIA Team or a priest. If your wedding is already scheduled within the next 12 months, you will most likely be invited to put the time and energy needed into preparing for and beginning your marriage. This is also a very important and wonderful part of your faith journey! Having said this, you may simultaneously be attending the Catechumenate sessions and preparing to join the Church, **but racing to join the**

Church before your wedding does not respect you nor the unique faith journey that God is creating just for you.

I was baptized, but not as a Catholic. I wish to join the Catholic Church. Am I still looking at a year of preparation?

That depends on a variety of things. If you come to the Catholic faith community with a full experience of living the Christian life within the context of your previous faith community, you may be invited to study and understand the differences between Protestantism and Catholicism as well as obtain a clear understanding of the Catholic Sacraments. This may be sufficient preparation which builds upon your previous adult faith formation. On the other hand, if you come to join the Catholic Church with limited faith experience or knowledge, you will be better served with a fuller and more extensive experience within the RCIA process. The journey IS the way to faith! Your individual journey is the highest priority and just like any other relationship, our relationship with our God takes energy, intention, and time. Unlike adult baptisms, welcoming baptized adults into the Catholic Church can occur outside of the Easter season.

I was baptized as a Catholic but never received my first Eucharist nor been confirmed. Where do I fit in?

You would be invited into the weekly Catechumenate sessions and to prepare to complete your initiation into the Catholic faith community. You would be encouraged to journey in the Catechumenate from now until Easter. Unlike adult baptisms, welcoming baptized Catholics into full initiation can occur outside of the Easter season.

I was baptized as a Catholic and received my first Eucharist. I was never confirmed. Do I jump into the RCIA process too?

Yes, those who are solely preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation will also find the Catechumenate sessions to be an excellent way to prepare for the Sacrament of Confirmation. Adult Confirmations can also occur throughout the year.

I am divorced. Is this an issue as far as the RCIA process is concerned?

Each situation is unique but these are important issues to understand and sort out. You are encouraged to talk with an RCIA Team member or a priest about your unique situation when you first inquire into the RCIA process.

I understand that I need a sponsor?

Jesus taught his disciples the importance of community. It is meaningful that we walk this faith journey with companions. If you decide to join the Church or if you are a Catholic who wishes to complete your initiation, you will need a sponsor from the Catholic faith community. Basically a sponsor is a fully initiated Catholic who will serve as a companion, listener, and mentor. The sponsor will also help you to learn more about the parish and ways to live out the Catholic faith.

Is there any cost associated with RCIA?

No. However, over the years, people who have been through the process have told us that they think there should be because you get more out of something when you have a stakehold in it. Thus, with the guidance of people who have been through the program, the "recommended" fee for the RCIA has been set at \$50. This is payable at any point during the next several months. The fee helps to cover the cost of materials used. If this fee is not affordable, please adjust your contribution to your resources. Please place your fee in a sealed envelope. On the outside, please mark "RCIA." The envelope will be turned into the accounting office, which keeps track of RCIA receipts and disbursements, as a contribution to the church.