

St. Joseph Catholic Church  
Becoming Catholic: Frequently Asked Questions

**How can I become Catholic?**

If you are un-baptized then you will enter the Church through baptism. If you are already baptized then you will enter the Church by making a profession of faith. The **Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)** is the Church's way to initiate new members who thereby become Catholic.

Who is the R.C.I.A. for?

1. It is for those who have **never been baptized**. Through prayer and study of the faith you will enter the Church through baptism. Easter is the usual time for adult baptism in the Catholic Church.
2. It is for those **who are baptized and have joined us from another Christian tradition** but have little knowledge and experience of what it means to be a Catholic Christian. For a person to become Catholic they do not need to be baptized again. One may come into "Full Communion" by a period of study and participation in liturgy with our community. The Catholic Church respects your Christian upbringing and the faith experiences that are part of your life. Becoming Catholic does not mean rejecting your previous faith background. You can now live it out in the Catholic Church.
3. It is for **adult Catholics who now wish to complete the sacraments of Christian initiation**: Confirmation and Eucharist.

**What is a "Rite"?**

A rite is a public religious celebration. We celebrate a number of rites during the year as a part of the RCIA.

- The **Rite of Acceptance** (for those not yet baptized) and the **Rite of Welcome** (for the baptized) celebrate your decision to seriously pursue membership in the Catholic community.
- Each Sunday, we celebrate the **Rite of Dismissal** when our candidates are dismissed with the prayers of the assembly at the 8:00 a.m. Mass.
- In the **Rite of Election**, our bishop formally welcomes you to the Church and declares that you are among the "Elect"; that is, the chosen ones. We celebrate this on the first Sunday of Lent, after the parish has given you a prayerful send off in the Rite of Sending. On the second Sunday of Lent, in the **Rite of Calling the Candidates to Continuing Conversion** the bishop formally recognizes the baptized candidates who will soon be making their profession of faith.
- The **Rites of Christian Initiation** celebrate your entry into "full communion" with the Catholic faithful through baptism, Eucharist and confirmation.

**What are some aspects of the process?**

**Worship:** Candidates participate at the 8:00 a.m. Sunday Mass every week and come forward for prayer by the community and dismissal for continued reflection on the Sunday Scripture and study of what it means to be a Catholic Christian.

**Study:** *Foundations in Faith* sessions are held on Sundays. These begin with the dismissal and continue until 10:40 a.m. There is a break at 9:00 a.m. for coffee and donuts with the parish community.

St. Joseph Catholic Church  
Becoming Catholic: Frequently Asked Questions

**Prayer:** Through participation in Sunday Mass, parish prayer services, an RCIA retreat on the first weekend of Lent, and personal devotional time.

**Social:** The community is an important aspect of Christian life. Participation in various parish events is encouraged.

**Service:** Outreach to others is essential to the Christian way of life. Sponsors introduce their candidates to the opportunities available and help make the connections. Opportunities for service often exist within one's own family as well.

**What are the expectations for those involved in the RCIA process?**

You are expected to participate in the weekly *Foundations in Faith* sessions. You are expected to attend Mass every Sunday and participate in other liturgical celebrations. It is preferred that you come to the 8:00 a.m. Mass because that is when the Rite of Dismissal is celebrated. If occasionally you cannot come at that time, you are expected to attend one of the other weekend Masses: Saturday at 5:30 p.m.; Sunday at 11:00 a.m. or 5:30 p.m. As you attend Mass, the faith community will witness to your commitment and come to know you and pray for you.

**I'm not much of a student. Is this a "class?"**

The RCIA *Foundations in Faith* sessions should not be considered a "class." We want you to discover God on a personal level. There are no tests, no grades. The goal is conversion through a "change of heart."

**What am I expected to know?**

Your faith journey is a time of formation and conversion. Faith formation involves learning about the faith, practices and doctrines, but we do not stop there. It is also about conversion. Your faith journey began before you contacted us and will continue throughout your life. Conversion is a time for you to grow in the awareness of your relationship with God and with the Catholic Church. Bring an open heart and mind. You will learn to live out your call to be a disciple of Jesus within the Catholic faith.

**How long does it take to become a Catholic?**

This question is answered differently by everyone and it is difficult to give a time frame at the outset. There is no need to rush your faith journey. If you have not been baptized, the process usually takes at least one year. Adult baptisms are celebrated at the Easter Vigil. If you have already been baptized into another Christian faith tradition, you may require less time, depending on the faith formation you previously received and your present involvement in the practice of your faith. We want to listen to both your needs and desires. We also do not want to deprive you of the opportunity to discern God's call at this important moment in your life. Time is needed for your faith formation as an adult and we ask that you be open to the process.

**What if I get started and decide this isn't for me?**

Faith in God and the decision to become a member of the Catholic Church are personal choices that must be made in an atmosphere of complete freedom. We will try our best to help you understand what it means to be a Catholic Christian. But we sincerely believe that you must be allowed to use God's gifts of conscience and free will without feeling

St. Joseph Catholic Church  
Becoming Catholic: Frequently Asked Questions

any pressure from us. If you decide not to become Catholic, it is okay for you to step away from the RCIA process.

**What is a sponsor?**

A sponsor is an active member of the Catholic community of St. Joseph's who is willing to be a friend and guide, and to participate in the RCIA with you. An active member attends Mass every Sunday, receives the sacraments frequently, and participates in the parish in other ways as well. If there is someone you know who is a practicing Catholic and would be willing to be your sponsor, please invite them. Otherwise we will assign a sponsor from our faith community to accompany you during this time.

**Can my spouse or fiancé be my sponsor?**

A spouse may participate in the RCIA with you or may choose to be a sponsor to another candidate; however, an unrelated person or another member of the Catholic community will be assigned to you as your sponsor while you are in the RCIA. This provides an opportunity to broaden your perspective. You do not need to find your own sponsor. We have members from our parish that have volunteered to join you in this effort.

**I have children and teens that aren't members of the Church either. What about them?**

We have a Rite of Christian Initiation for Children (RCIC) for those who are ages 7 to 18. Children under the age of 7 may be baptized at other times than the Easter Vigil. Contact the Director of Religious Education, Caroline Van Atter, in the parish office.

**I have very young children. Do you provide child care during the RCIA Foundations in Faith sessions?**

Unfortunately, no. If you need child care, you should arrange your own or (if your children are well behaved) you can bring them to *Foundations in Faith* sessions. If you and your spouse are attending RCIA together, you might try alternating attendance. If child care is still a difficulty, please let us know.

**I have been through a divorce. Will this stand in the way of my becoming a Catholic?**

If you have been divorced and not remarried, this will not stand in the way of your becoming Catholic. If you have been divorced and remarried, there is a process by which the Church grants you a Declaration of Freedom to Marry in the Catholic Church, and through which your current marriage can be recognized in the Catholic Church. The Parish and the Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana will work with you through this process.

**I am getting married. Will I be able to complete the RCIA by then?**

The faith journey to become a Catholic takes time and energy. The timeline of a faith journey does not always coincide with that of a wedding. If you are engaged, the deepening of your relationship with your fiancé and the preparation for your wedding takes time. The deepening of your relationship with the Church community and the preparation for your baptism or full communion with the Church also takes time. It may

St. Joseph Catholic Church  
Becoming Catholic: Frequently Asked Questions

or may not be possible for both journeys to arrive at a particular calendar date at the same time. We will work with you through this process.

**May I bring a friend?**

Yes, we encourage it! As a matter of fact, spouses, fiancés, and sponsors are especially encouraged to join us on a regular basis.

**What is the time commitment?**

We ask that you commit to our Sunday sessions which include worship and prayer with our faith community by attendance at the 8:00 a.m. Sunday Mass, study of scriptures and *Foundations in Faith* sessions until 10:40 a.m. We also expect you to come to the RCIA retreat the first weekend in Lent. This retreat is held at the John XXIII Retreat Center in Hartford City, beginning at 7 p.m. on Friday and concluding at 1:00 p.m. on Sunday. We also expect you to participate in the various liturgical rites associated with the RCIA.

**Is there a cost for participating in RCIA?**

No. We supply you with everything that you need.

**When does the program begin?**

We have “Come and See” inquiry sessions at various times throughout the year, so you can begin anytime or as soon as you are ready. The time to receive the sacraments (or reception into Full Communion is somewhat dependent on when you start the sessions and on personal situations, although Easter Vigil is the primary time for adult baptisms.

**How do I get started?**

You start the RCIA process by coming to inquiry. For more information contact either Deacon Pat Gallagher in the parish office (765-482-5558) or O.A. and Candy Kincaid, the coordinators of the RCIA Team (765-482-4819).