

What is the RCIA?

Here are the answers to questions people often ask about the Catholic Church's process for instructing and welcoming new members.

Q. What does "RCIA" stand for?

A. R.C.I.A. is the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

Q. Who goes through the RCIA process?

A. Anyone wishing to learn more about or become a fully participating member in the Catholic Church, including people who:

- are considering conversion to Catholicism;
- want to learn about Catholicism but do not plan on converting;
- have never been baptized;
- have been baptized in another Christian church;
- were baptized in the Catholic Church, but never confirmed (*see next page*);
- are members of the Catholic Church who want to increase their understanding of the faith.

Q. Do I have to meet with a priest?

A. Our RCIA program is administered by lay staff and volunteers. Our pastor participates in selected sessions and is available to meet individually as requested.

Q. Is there a fee?

A. No, the parish provides books and materials.

Q. What is involved in the RCIA process?

A. Adults usually attend one 90-minute class per week for about 9 months beginning in September. Sessions for children and teens are organized according to the needs of those attending and may extend to two years.

Q. What are classes like?

A. The RCIA is, first of all, an opportunity to examine and develop our relationship with God. So, group prayer and Scripture study are an important part of each class.

We also explore the fundamentals of the Catholic faith. Class topics include: Church history and practices; the sacraments; the structure and meaning of the Mass; Mary and the saints; morality; and prayer.

Led by various members of the RCIA team, classes are enjoyably interactive as well as instructional. We use a



mixture of lecture and small-group discussion, with plenty of time for participants' questions and observations. There are occasional guest speakers, field trips, and special events.

Q. Do I have to do more than the classes?

A. Besides regular classes, candidates are expected to attend Mass on Sundays and holy days, and to participate in several liturgical rites – public ceremonies – which give the entire church community the opportunity to pray with and for those who are preparing for sacraments.

Q. What about homework and tests?

A. There is a very manageable amount of reading and writing to do in preparation for each class. There are no tests!

RCIA — Questions & Answers

Q. When do I become a member of the Catholic Church?

A. During the Easter Vigil Mass during Holy Week, catechumens are baptized, and those already baptized in other Christian churches make a profession of faith. Both groups are also confirmed and receive Holy Communion.

Previously baptized Catholic adults are confirmed on the feast of Pentecost (in May or June) at the Cathedral in Philadelphia (see below).

Q. Why does the process take so long?

A. One of the beauties of the RCIA program is that it takes you through much of the liturgical year, so that many classroom topics – Lent, for example – can be explored as they actually occur on the Church calendar.



But most of all, the RCIA is a spiritual journey – a gradual process that gives you time to grow in faith and understanding, and to carefully consider where God is calling you.

Q. Do I have to do this at the parish where I live?

A. Sometimes work schedules, etc., make it impossible for people to be part of a program in the parish where they live. The RCIA is a rite of the Church throughout the world, so the process of being welcomed into the Catholic Church is valid regardless of your point of entry.

Q. What if I change my mind?

A. That's not a problem. In fact, participants are asked to re-evaluate their interest at several steps along the way. Some people decide to

continue the classes with no plan of becoming Catholic.

Q. Do I need a godparent to complete the program?

A. Each person who is preparing for sacraments needs a sponsor – a practicing Catholic who knows them, can attest to their sincerity, and has a vested interest in their conversion process. It can be a spouse, a relative, a friend, or a spiritual advisor.

Sponsors should be available to accompany you to at least some classes and to all liturgical rites. If you don't have a potential sponsor in mind, you will be matched to someone on the RCIA team who is ready and willing to assume this role.

Q. Who do I call to find out more or get started?

A. Madelyn O'Hara, Adult Faith Formation Coordinator, heads the RCIA program for adults at St. Ann (610-639-0923, stannadulthood@comcast.net).

Confirmation for Catholic Adults

Q. I was baptized in the Catholic Church, but never confirmed? What do I do?

A. In addition to the RCIA, St. Ann Parish offers another program to help adult, baptized Catholics to receive the sacrament of

Confirmation – and, if necessary, the sacraments of Reconciliation and First Holy Communion as well.

Preparation of adults for Confirmation includes a review of Catholic teaching and practices, plus an

opportunity to develop a more active prayer life and a deeper relationship with God.

To find out more, contact Madelyn O'Hara 610-639-0923, stannadulthood@comcast.net.

