

SACRAMENTAL  
PREPARATION *for adults*



RCIA EXPLAINED

MEMBERSHIP IN  
THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

St. Francis of Assisi Parish  
1066-26<sup>th</sup> Street  
Sacramento, CA 95816

**[stfrancisparish.com/rcia.html](http://stfrancisparish.com/rcia.html)**

## HOW DO I BECOME A MEMBER OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH?

The process of joining the Roman Catholic Church is known as the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults [RCIA]. The Catechumenate, as it is often called, is a late 20<sup>th</sup> century restoration of a 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century process that prepared people for acceptance into the Christian faith. The **Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults** is a faith journey, which consists of four distinct steps.

### Your First Step: *Inquiry*

This journey starts when someone feels drawn to the expression of Christian values, and might seek answers to questions such as: ***What do Catholics believe? Why? Who is God? How is God active in my life? What are the sacraments?*** This part of the journey may last only a few months, or a number of years. As we take these steps together as a group, some inquirers may realize that they are not ready to belong to the Christian community and may choose to continue to search for spiritual meaning in other ways. Others may find that they are attracted to a way of life that draws them to the person of Christ. Like the disciples of old, you may wish to follow Jesus and take the next step of this journey into the ***Catechumenate***.

### **CATECHUMENATE**

This step begins with the ***Rite of Acceptance***, where you will be claimed for Christ and marked with the sign of the cross. Those who have not been baptized are referred to as ***catechumens***. Those baptized in another faith tradition are referred to as ***candidates***.

This period of RCIA is a time for the catechumens and candidates to deepen in faith and commitment to Christ. You will participate in the Liturgy of the Word each Sunday during Mass. Then, along with the other RCIA catechumen and candidates, you will be dismissed from Mass with the book of the Gospels and move to a separate meeting place to reflect with the RCIA catechists (and each other) on the gospel message and how it pertains to your lives.

This stage of the R.C.I.A. usually lasts a year or more. It includes formal sessions on Catholic teaching and practice and is an opportunity for you to grow in prayer and to mature in faith. With the support of community members, parish companions, godparents and catechists, your relationship with Christ will continue to deepen.

### **Preparation:**

### ***PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT***

On the first Sunday of Lent catechumen and candidates around the world participate in the ***Rite of Election*** and the ***Call to Continuing Conversion***. In local parishes, catechumens inscribe their name in a book, which is presented to the Bishop in a ceremony at the cathedral later that day. At the Rite of Election, the Bishop then elects (chooses) the catechumens in the name of Christ to receive the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist at Easter. The Bishop also calls (exhorts) the candidates to continue growing in their faith as they prepare for Confirmation and Eucharist. The next 40 days are intensive days of preparation to receive the sacraments at Easter.

The local community accompanies the ***Elect*** (not baptized) and ***Candidates*** (already baptized) by participating in the Lenten practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Special rites of interior searching, known as the ***scrutinies***, are celebrated with the elect and candidates on

the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> Sundays of Lent. This period of the R.C.I.A. culminates at the Easter Vigil with baptism by immersion for those who are not baptized, a profession of faith for those who are baptized, confirmation, and the reception of Eucharist.

## **The First Year: MYSTAGOGIA**

Mystagogia (miss-tuh-go-gee-uh) means “going deeper in the faith”, and is the name of the final step of your RCIA journey. Now referred to as a **Neophyte**, you may find yourself rejoicing in your growing awareness of God’s presence within and around you. Instead of leaving after the homily, you remain with the community to pray and eat at the banquet of the Eucharist.

Neophytes continue to gather periodically throughout the year to share prayer and community with one another as they become more integrated into the faith community of the parish and the larger Church.

### **HOW DO I KNOW IF THE RCIA PROCESS IS THE RIGHT ONE FOR ME?**

The R.C.I.A. process is designed for adults who are not baptized or those who were baptized as infants but have little experience the Roman Catholic tradition.

If you are an adult who was baptized and active in another Christian tradition, and have more than a year of experience within the Roman Catholic tradition, you may want to discuss this process and any other available alternatives with the R.C.I.A. Coordinator.

### **HOW DO I FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE R.C.I.A. PROCESS?**

The best way is to simply begin. Inquiry sessions are available four times per year. Just use the URL at the bottom of the page to fill out our form and let us help you start on your faith journey.

### **NOT A WALK TAKEN ALONE.**

Each step you take on this journey will deepen your relationship with Christ. But these are not steps that you must take alone. By participating in this journey with the candidates and catechumens, members of the St. Francis faith community have an opportunity to renew their baptismal promises and strengthen their call to walk the way of Christ.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT**

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To take the first step, or for additional information:  
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