

We are delighted that you are investigating the possibility of entering into the Catholic faith tradition and becoming a member of our parish community.

The Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults has a number of stages to help interested persons move along to becoming informed and active members of the Catholic Christian community:

INQUIRY

The first stage of the formal initiation process allows you, the inquirer, to get to know the parish community-and, for the Church community to get to know you, as well. When both parties are satisfied that there is a desire to continue with the initiation process, you are accepted into the Order of Catechumens with the Rite of Welcoming.

CATECHUMENATE

As a catechumen, you are accompanied by a sponsor (or sponsors), as you study the Catholic faith. Together, you and your sponsor(s) participate in several rites that draw you more deeply into the faith and the community. Therefore, it is imperative that your sponsor(s) be baptized in the Catholic faith, committed to the expression of his or her faith, and capable of serving as a mentor for you, the catechumen. Sponsors model and support your spiritual journey both before and after Baptism. The Catechumenate concludes with the Rite of Election.

ENLIGHTENMENT

The period of Enlightenment coincides with the season of Lent and concludes on Holy Saturday, which is the Saturday immediately preceding Easter Sunday. It is a time of intensive preparation with its own particular rites. These rites consist of questions asked of you and the other members of the elect, and include your profession of faith.

This stage ends with the Easter Vigil liturgy, when the elect who have already been baptized will be confirmed, while the elect who have never been baptized will receive both Baptism and Confirmation. Your sacramental initiation into the church culminates in the reception of the Eucharist for the first time during this liturgy.

MYSTAGOGIA

Mystagogy is the final period of the RCIA process that formally takes place during the 50 days between Easter and Pentecost-but, in reality, it is one that continues throughout our lifetime. As a new member of the adult faith community, you will be immersed more deeply into the mysteries of our faith and introduced to the many ways to actively live out your faith commitment. Mystagogy is an invitation into God's self-revelation as viewed through the lens of your everyday lived experience.

What is RCIA?

RCIA (which stands for Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) is a program designed to help non-Catholics and non-practicing Catholics learn more about Catholicism through a series of classes, discussions, prayer times and ceremonies. This program helps people grow in faith and knowledge of God as they consider becoming Catholic. There is no obligation to join the Catholic Church.

St. John Berchmans' RCIA program is open to anyone who is interested in learning more about the Catholic Faith. If you are not yet sure whether you want to become Catholic, you are still welcome to participate as you make your decision.

People from all sorts of religious backgrounds join the RCIA. Some have been baptized in another Christian religion and some have not. Some have been practicing members of a Christian religion for years and some have had little or no religious instruction or support. Some are already Catholic but are seeking a greater understanding of our Faith.

The RCIA is a mix of praying, learning facts, discussing how these apply to our lives, participating in prayerful ceremonies (called “rites”) and most importantly, using all of these experiences to build and grow in a relationship with God.

What is the process and when are the classes?

Beginning in September, we meet every Wednesday night from 7-8:30 pm, focusing on the Creed, Morality and the Sacraments. Everything is presented according to Christ’s revelation as handed down to us in the written form of Sacred Scripture and Oral Tradition. Both Scripture and Tradition come to us through Christ’s appointed Teacher for all time: the Church.

Beginning at the end of October, we also meet on Sunday mornings for “Breaking Open the Word”. We attend the 10:00 am Mass and are dismissed by Father after the homily (sermon) to “go forth to further break open the Word of God”. We then go to a meeting room to discuss the Scripture readings of that day while the rest of the congregation prays for us as they continue the Mass.

We continue our Sunday Breaking Open the Word and Wednesday night meetings until Holy Week, the week before Easter. Everyone who is ready becomes Catholic at the Easter Vigil, the Saturday night before Easter. Those who are already baptized in another Christian religion (Candidates) enter the Catholic Church by making a Profession of Faith and receiving the sacraments of Confirmation and the Eucharist. [They celebrate the sacrament of Confession (also called Penance or Reconciliation) before Easter].

Those who have not ever been baptized (“the Elect”) enter the Catholic Church by receiving the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist.

After Easter we continue to meet on Wednesday nights for about six weeks, until the feast of Pentecost. We continue to learn about our Faith as we grow in the experience of the sacraments.

This entire process is highlighted throughout the year by several ceremonies celebrated during Mass here at St. John Berchmans. We also participate in a ceremony during a prayer service that the Bishop celebrates with us at St. Rose of Lima. All the people preparing to become Catholic at other parishes in the archdiocese join for this prayer service, which takes place in late February or early March.

Who teaches the class?

Rosalinda Rodríguez is the Director of Faith Formation and Religious Education and along with the RCIA team usually makes presentations or participates weekly. She has worked for twenty-six years as the Director Religious Education in Eagle Pass, Texas and San Antonio, Texas. She has also been Coordinator of RCIA and adult Confirmation for the past 20 years in the San Antonio Archdiocese. She has been teaching RCIA for 18 years, as well as having worked with several other parish programs. Rosalinda is married

to Deacon Jesus Rodriguez and together have raised one son and two daughters and are proud grandparents of 5 grandchildren.

What is taught in RCIA?

The teaching presented here at St. John Berchmans is authentic and in conformity with Catholic Church Teaching. It has been handed down to us from Christ in both oral and written form, and, for centuries, has been guarded by the Church.

How do I begin?

Simple. Call Rosalinda Rodríguez at 433-2121. She is the Director of Faith Formation and Religious Education and will help you get started.

I've been baptized in another religion. Will I be re-baptized?

No. You will enter the Catholic Church by making a "Profession of Faith".

When can I become Catholic?

Generally a person will join the RCIA during early Fall of one year and become Catholic at Easter time the next year. Once in a while this time frame changes according to the needs of the person.

What if I go through the RCIA and choose not to become Catholic?

That's your decision and you will not be pressured to become Catholic. Some people learn about Catholicism for a few years before deciding to become Catholic and some never choose to do so. Regardless of your decision, you will be welcome here at St. John Berchmans.

Will becoming Catholic really affect my everyday life?

Completely. Catholicism is a way of life. You live the faith and apply it to your life.