

Becoming Catholic: Christian Initiation Process

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is a faith formation process by which adults become full members of the Catholic community. People who feel called to the Catholic Christian community are enabled to deepen their faith while at the same time they learn all the traditions of the Catholic Church. While education is an important component, it is primarily a formation process.

The Faith Formation Process is led by Sr. Brigid McGuigan together with three teams of catechists. Sr. Brigid, originally from Co. Derry, Northern Ireland, has been ministering in the United States since 1958. She has served God's people in a variety of ways, as a school teacher, a Director of Religious Education for parishes, Director for Campus Ministry for College level for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, and consultant for Religious Communities and parish groups throughout North America. She has been Pastoral Associate in Our Lady of Malibu Parish since 1997.

Her catechists are active members of Our Lady of Malibu Parish, who basically share their Catholic faith and have been formed and trained to lead this three stage faith formation process.

The Process of Becoming Catholic

The process of becoming Catholic involves three stages:

Stage 1:

The Inquiry Process

During the Inquiry process the person is helped to discern if his or her desire to become Catholic is a genuine call from God and has an opportunity to ask questions about what it means to be Catholic. During this process the person learns how to listen to the Word of God and apply it to his or her life. Inquirers meet once a week with other Inquirers and with a team of catechists. Generally, people discern within six to eight weeks whether or not they are ready to move to the next stage. If Inquirers are called to take the next step, they are welcomed by the entire community into the Church and become Catechumens. The word Catechumen is an ancient Christian word that means a person who is seeking to discover how the Word of God and Catholic practices can echo and change their lives.

Stage 11.

The Catechumenate

The Catechumenate has two complimentary parts: The Dismissal Process and the Catechesis. Each Sunday throughout the year the catechumens attend the 8:00am Mass and after they have heard the Word of God proclaimed in the Scriptures and the sermon they are dismissed. They spend twenty to thirty minutes with the help of a catechist reflecting on what they heard and what God is saying to them personally and how their lives are going to be different because of what they heard.

Catechesis

In the catechesis process, the catechumens have an opportunity to learn about the whole range of Catholic beliefs, customs, and practices in a way that also helps them to grow in their faith and be reshaped and transformed. This process is led by a different catechist each week and takes place each Sunday (except during July and August) after the dismissal process. It lasts for about one hour. The catechumens will have sponsors to help them along. Generally, catechumens spend about one to one and a half years in the process. When the catechumens are ready to become full members of the Catholic community they go through a special period of preparation during the forty days of Lent. At the Easter Vigil they are welcomed fully into the Church through the Sacraments of baptism, confirmation and first Communion.

State 111: The Neophyte Year

During this stage, the newly formed Catholics (neophytes) meet monthly generally in one of their homes to develop a deeper understanding of the Sacraments and God's Word. This is often followed by a pot-luck dinner. The Neophyte Year is brought to a close by a special Rite at the next Easter Vigil.

How to Get Started:

Please contact Sr. Brigid by phone or e-mail and arrange to meet with her. She will help you better understand the process and talk to you about your special needs and schedule.