

July 2023

Dear Catechumen/Candidate,

Thank you for inquiring about the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) program at St. Paul the Apostle Church. RCIA is the process established by the universal Church for individuals to become Catholic and receive the Sacraments of Initiation—Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist. This initiation process also involves a parish community experiencing a renewal in faith as it prepares and welcomes new members into the Church.

The Rite speaks of conversion as a “spiritual journey.” Centered on fostering a deep relationship with Jesus and the Church he founded, this journey takes place through distinct stages over time suitable to bring about a thorough catechesis, significant experience of the parish community, and commitment to the liturgical and moral life of the Catholic faith.

The RCIA process is a restoration of the ancient catechumenate, arising within the first three centuries following the apostles' era. This was the early Church's way of Christianizing the pagan Roman Empire. The Second Vatican Council called for the restoration and use of this venerable and powerful method of initiation for the worldwide Church (cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 64).

The RCIA process may last a few months or years, depending on the needs and readiness. When a child is baptized, the Church expects that the child will be gradually initiated into the life of faith by his or her parents, godparents, and parish community. When an adult or older child enters the Church, they must attend RCIA sessions to be properly catechized.

Enclosed is important information about baptisms, marriages, godparents, sponsors, etc. Please read these sections closely and contact the parish with any questions. It is best to ask questions now rather than waiting until the Easter Vigil, as you may not be able to be initiated into the Church.

Also enclosed are schedules for the RCIA sessions and the yearly liturgical calendar. RCIA sessions begin on Sunday, 20 August 2023. Sessions commence promptly at 11:30 am on the Church's lower level in room 3. This room can be located through the South doors and downstairs. An elevator is located by the gift shop for your convenience and is best utilized by entering the front doors and turning left.

Through prayer, study, and conversation, we hope your journey will bring you to the fullness of the Catholic faith. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely in Christ,

Andrew T. Burson

Andrew T. Burson, M.A.
Director of Parish Ministry

WHAT IS RCIA?

RCIA stands for the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, the process by which an adult (over seven) is initiated into the Catholic Church through the reception of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Eucharist. Through this process, the adult is formed in the faith, with the local parish community serving as catechists and models.

RCIA has been around since the early Church and was how the Church prepared un-baptized adults to be received into the Church. The RCIA process was an intense study, prayer, and conversion period, often lasting up to three years. During the process, a sponsor would testify to the community about the individual's conversion, authenticity, and genuine readiness.

The Second Vatican Council revamped the RCIA process but, at the same time, keeping with the spirit of the communal participation of the whole Church. Keeping in the spirit of the original preparation, the base elements of study, prayer, community, and discernment remain integral. However, persons may enter the Church in a shorter timeframe based on his/her needs. While there are standards and measures to discern a person's proper place in the process and how long each will be in each phase, there is no absolute schedule for an RCIA process to run.

The decision to accept the faith, to become Catholic, or to complete initiation, must be the free will of each person. The Catholic Church does not coerce guilt, nor do we manipulate this decision.

Regardless of a person's age or circumstances, the Church is tasked with the duties, rights, and responsibilities to ensure that everyone meets the requirements set out by the Code of Canon Law, as well as publicly demonstrates the desire, readiness, and lifestyle that reflects acceptance and understanding of the Gospel and becoming a member of the Catholic Church.

RCIA is comprised of four phases and rituals. These follow the experiences of conversion and initiation into the Christian faith.

Inquiry is the phase that mimics the first experience of hearing God's Word and becoming aware of God's presence, love, and work in our lives. In this first awareness, one is getting to know who God is. It is the phase in which the first stirrings of faith in Jesus Christ begin. For one already baptized, it is a re-awakening of that awareness, the beginning of renewal, and the first intentional integration into the community of believers. The ritual that goes with this first stage is the Rite of Acceptance (unbaptized) and the Rite of Welcoming (baptized). This is for those who have indicated and given evidence of conversion and desire to follow Christ through the Catholic Church.

Catechumenate is the apprenticeship phase towards Christian discipleship. This is accomplished through formal instruction in the faith's core teachings and beliefs (doctrines) and experienced through liturgy, service, and parish community life. This approach aims for a thorough integration of the faith. The Rite of Election is the ritual that accompanies this phase. Rite of Election is for the unbaptized who have given clear evidence of acquaintance and integration of the core teachings and beliefs and the desire to accept baptism. Call to Continuing Conversion for the

baptized who also demonstrate acquaintance and integration of the core teachings and beliefs and desire to complete their initiation of come into full communion with the Catholic Church.

Enlightenment is the phase, indicated by its name, points to an intense, inward reflection and discernment. In this phase, the candidate seeks to be purified in their intentions to follow Christ more fully, to recognize any sinful attachments or attitudes that still separate or diminish their relationship with Christ, and to receive the light they need to follow him more authentically.

With Mystagogia, it is said that all the baptized faithful are continuing this phase because we are still reflecting on the story of Christ and still experiencing the conversion from our Christian initiation, regardless of when that occurred. The Mystagogia occurs strictly for the neophytes and newly professed members between Easter and Pentecost. The Mystagogia period is like the story of the walk along the road to Emmaus. The disciples were so excited and filled with wonder telling the story of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection that they did not recognize it was Christ to whom they were speaking until the breaking of the bread. He helped them understand his story in relation to the Scriptures and all they had experienced. It is a time of reflection, celebration, and active participation in the life and mission of the Church.

BEGINNING THE RCIA PROCESS

How do you know if or when it's time to begin RCIA? There's no one perfect answer. Each person must discern the level of desire they feel and what their schedule can handle. As one progresses in the RCIA process, each phase calls for a more intense commitment, so one may need to go slower in one phase or another due to scheduling issues. We do not put an expiration date on this process or pre-set date for Initiation or Profession of Faith.

Un-baptized: Have you felt a stirring or sense of something special moving your life? Have you wondered about the joy or peace you've witnessed in friends or family who practice their Christian faith? Are you tired of the mixed information that well-meaning people give about who Jesus is, and you want to know for yourself? Do you desire a life of mission, blessing, and joy for yourself?

Baptized-only Catholic: Have you felt a calling to begin living your faith more deeply? Is the desire to know your faith and have your life changed by it becoming more persistent? Are you longing to experience the joy of the sacraments, Mass, and belonging to a Catholic faith community?

Baptized non-Catholic Christian: Have you had an experience with the Catholic Church, either through a person or event that has touched you? Are you interested in learning what Catholics believe and how they live their faith daily? Are you attracted to Catholic worship or teaching and desire to become part of this Church? Have you been attending Mass for some time but never been invited to become Catholic?

BAPTISM

Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit, and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through baptism, we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; and we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church, and made sharers in her mission: “Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water in the word” (CCC 1213).

The Catholic Church teaches and professes one baptism for the remission of sin. To be valid, baptism must include the words: “[N.], *I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,*” with three separate pouring of water (or immersions) at each name of the persons of the Holy Trinity.

Other Christian churches, such as the Orthodox and mainline Protestant churches, use the same Trinitarian formula with water for baptism as the Catholic Church. Therefore, once verified, the Catholic Church accepts those baptisms as valid. However, we must be morally certain that such a baptism occurred and will request documentation.

The Catholic Church does not “re-baptize” a person already validly baptized. A valid baptism may only occur once in a person’s life because of the indelible spiritual mark or character imprinted on the person’s soul. This mark cannot be removed, repeated, or forgotten. It consecrates the baptized person for Christian worship. Therefore, we will only baptize a person if it is determined that they were either 1) never baptized or 2) were baptized in a formula not recognized by the Church.

MARITAL STATUS

Discussing your marital status (former, current, and future) will be necessary during the beginning process. Complete honesty is integral to ensuring one’s future or present sacramental life will begin on the right track or will be redirected, if necessary.

For inquirers who are currently married, we will inquire into the current marriage at the time the vows were made and any prior failed marriages. This includes marriages witnessed by non-Catholic ministers or civil authorities.

For individuals or couples with one or more prior marriages who are remarried, any past/current marriages must be reviewed to determine if an annulment or convalidation is required. Any annulments or convalidations must begin immediately and be completed before the Rite of Election/Call to Continuing Conversion.

For those engaged and seeking to be received into the Church, their and their future spouses’ complete marital history will be reviewed. If a formal petition is required, this process could take at least a year to complete. Other annulment forms usually take less time, depending on individual circumstances and the timelines of submitting all documents. It is not the intention of the Church to cause worry or burden but to ensure the road to full initiation is clear of any impediments.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

A baptized, non-Catholic will need to provide a copy of proof of their baptism. A person baptized in the Catholic Church must provide a new baptism certificate from the parish where they were baptized, and this certificate must be dated within six months of the parish office receiving it. An unbaptized person must produce a copy of their birth certificate/adoption decree and the parents' names on either document.

SPONSOR/GODPARENT

The ideal sponsor/godparent is mature in their faith and active in the parish to connect their candidate or catechumen to the life of the parish. In reference to Canon 893, those interested in becoming an RCIA sponsor/godparent must:

- § Be at least 16 years old,
- § Be fully initiated in the Catholic Church,
- § Not be the parent/guardian of the intended participant,
- § No previous marriages, and if married, it was witnessed by a priest or deacon.

All sponsors/godparents, including St. Paul parishioners, including St. Paul parishioners, will complete a statement indicating they are aware of and meet the requirements; and are active parishioners in good standing. This form will become part of the Church record. The role of the sponsor/godparent is to both support and witness the person's conversion and readiness to receive the sacraments. This is accomplished by attending the RCIA sessions, rites, and events with the inquirer while offering encouragement, listening, praying, and being an excellent example outside the Church.

The sponsor/godparent is the connection to the parish. Therefore, his/her participation in parish life is essential. The sponsor/godparent introduces the inquirer to fellow parishioners, invites them to parish events, and meets with the candidate for one-on-one support.

It is common for people to experience periods of uncertainty throughout the process. They may be challenged in their beliefs and moral attitudes by the new information they are receiving. The sponsor/godparent is there to encourage them to learn more and to pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance.

To this end, the RCIA sessions are designed with the inquirer's needs as the priority; those seeking information, discerning if God is calling them to live as Catholics. Therefore, for sponsors/godparents, incessant talking, preaching, "over-sharing," and dominating small group discussions is inappropriate. Quiet listening and time-sensitive sharing is the key.

The other aspect of a support role is recognizing and identifying the rich diversity of spirituality in the church. This means encouraging the inquirer to investigate how Catholics worship, pray, learn, and enrich their faith.

Not every person who begins the RCIA process is received into the Church. This is due to several possible reasons, including excessive absences, the decision to hold off or quit, or unresolved marital issues. Some may be received into the Church later, and others not. There is no expectation that any inquirer will accept to be initiated into the Church. This is a decision that must be made with absolute freedom. Sponsors/godparents are to provide the encouragement and support that an individual needs to freely choose what they believe God is asking of them, regardless of where the decision takes them. We are here to support them in the discernment process by providing the truth of our faith, the reality of what it means to be Catholic, praying for and with them, and welcoming them to be with us regardless of the outcome.

A sponsor/godparent to someone who is received into the Church or completes their initiation is connected to this person throughout their life. The role continues as one of encouragement and example. The inquirer will need to be re-introduced to fellow parishioners and ministry leaders and invited to learn about the different opportunities of the parish. Staying in touch throughout the first year is expected; this is a year of many firsts and one that the neophyte will need to feel welcomed. A special relationship will have taken place by this time; it is one to celebrate.

Certificate of Sponsorship for

(Name of Catechumen or Candidate)

I RECOGNIZE that a sponsor/godparent has a special relationship with the person to be baptized or confirmed. Along with the entire parish community, a sponsor/godparent serves as a model of Christian living for an individual as that person is renewed and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit.

WITH THAT UNDERSTANDING, I recognize that to serve as a sponsor/godparent, a person must:

- Be a Catholic who has been baptized, received the Eucharist, and been confirmed, and is currently living a sacramental life (*i.e.* attending Mass regularly) and is not in an irregular marriage.
- Be at least sixteen years of age.
- Lead a life of faith in harmony with the ministry they are undertaking and intend to undertake the ministry of a sponsor.
- Not be a parent of the individual to be confirmed.

I HEREBY ACCEPT these responsibilities and testify that I fulfill the requirements to serve in the ministry of sponsor/godparent.

Signature of Sponsor/Godparent

I HEREBY TESTIFY that *(name of sponsor/godparent)* _____ **is a**
registered member of *(name of parish)* _____ **and affirm**
that he/she fulfills all the requirements to serve in the ministry of
sponsor/godparent.



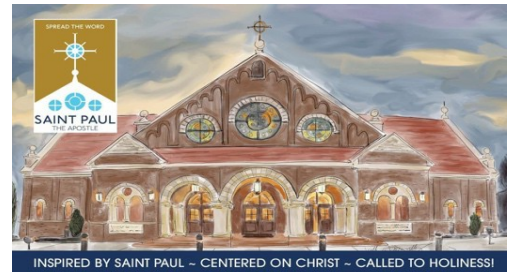
Parish seal

Signature of Pastor

Date

RCIA LITURGICAL CALENDAR

2023-2024

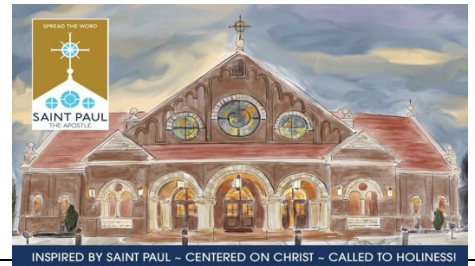


DATE	TIME	LITURGY
November 1, 2023	Various	Solemnity of All Saints (OB)
November 2, 2023	Various	Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed
November 12, 2023	10:00 am	Rite Acceptance/Welcoming
December 8, 2023	Various	Solemnity of the I.C. of the B.V.M. (OB)
December 25, 2023	Various	The Nativity of the Lord (OB)
January 1, 2024	Various	Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God
February 14, 2024	Various	Ash Wednesday
February 18, 2024	10:00 am	Rite of Sending
February 18, 2024	10:00 am	Rite of Calling Candidates to Continuing Conversion
February 18, 2024	TBD	Rite of Election (Diocesan liturgy at St. Paul)
March 3, 2024	10:00 am	First Scrutiny (Dismissal)
March 10, 2024	10:00 am	Second Scrutiny (Dismissal)
March 17, 2024	10:00 am	Third Scrutiny (Dismissal)
March 24, 2024	10:00 am	Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion
March 28, 2024	7:00 pm	Holy Thursday
March 29, 2024	3:00 pm	Good Friday of the Lord's Passion
March 30, 2024	11:00 am	Easter Vigil Rehearsal
March 30, 2024	8:30 pm	Easter Vigil

OB=Holy Day of Obligation

RCIA SESSIONS CALENDAR

2023-2024



DATE	TOPIC	READING— <i>CREDO</i>
August 20, 2023	Introduction	
August 27, 2023	Knowing & Desiring God- no session 3 September	Chapter 1
September 10, 2023	Revelation & Faith	Chapter 2
September 17, 2023	Introduction to Prayer & the Sacraments	Chapter 3
September 24, 2023	The Most Holy Trinity	Chapter 4
October 1, 2023	Creation & the Fall	Chapter 5
October 8, 2023	Encountering Jesus in the Scriptures	Chapter 6
October 15, 2023	Jesus Christ: True God & True Man	Chapter 7
October 22, 2023	Jesus Christ: Our Savior & Redeemer	Chapter 8
October 29, 2023	Fall Break	
November 5, 2023	The Holy Spirit	Chapter 9
November 12, 2023	The Church	Chapter 10
November 19, 2023	The Blessed Virgin Mary & Communion of Saints	Chapter 11
November 26, 2023	Thanksgiving Break	
December 3, 2023	Baptism & Confirmation	Chapter 12
December 10, 2023	The Mass & Liturgical Prayer	Chapter 14
December 17, 2023	Confession	Chapter 15
Dec.24—Jan.1	Christmas Break	
January 7, 2024	Marriage	Chapter 16
January 14, 2024	Happiness & the Christian Moral Life	Chapter 17
January 20, 2024	Retreat (TBD)	Eucharist
January 28, 2024	Law & the Ten Commandments	Chapter 18
February 4, 2024	The Life of Grace	Chapter 19
February 11, 2024	Faith	Chapter 20
February 18, 2024	Rite of Election	
February 25, 2024	The Virtue of Hope & the Last Things	Chapter 21

March 3, 2024	Love of God	Chapter 22
March 10, 2024	Love of Neighbor	Chapter 23
March 17, 2024	Prudence & Conscience	Chapter 24
March 24, 2024	Justice, Temperance & Charity	Chapter 25/26
March 30, 2024	Easter Vigil	
April 7, 2024	Catholic Life	Chapter 48-55
April 14, 2024	Customs, Rules, and Etiquette	Chapter 56-64
April 21, 2024	Being a Modern Catholic	Chapter 65-81
April 28, 2024	Knowing & Defending Your Faith	Chapter 82-92
May 5, 2024	Evangelization	Chapter 93-100
May 12, 2024	Mother's Day	
May 19, 2024	Open Forum	Any Topic