

St. Francis of Assisi, La Quinta
RCIA GUIDELINES



RCIA is a journey of conversion to the person of
Jesus the Christ

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Thinking of joining the Roman Catholic Church? The Catholic RCIA stages are a good model of basic faith development. This article provides some detailed guidance for that process.

Where do you begin?

Well, you just begin from where you are right **now!**

Many adults entering the Catholic Church, or those just thinking about it, follow a process known as the **RCIA** — the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

The RCIA process has several distinct stages. These Catholic RCIA stages are a **good model** of faith development itself, so this article will fit you whether or not you're actually in the RCIA process.

- **Inquiry:** the initial period before you decide to enter the Catholic Church. You're asking questions and checking it out, but aren't yet ready to commit.
- **Catechumenate:** those who decide to enter the Church and are being formed for a life in Christ are called *catechumens*, an ancient name from the early Church. In this stage, you're developing your faith and are being "catechized" — learning about the faith, the basic points about Catholic faith and life.
- **Purification and preparation:** The Church will help you focus and intensify your faith as you prepare to commit your life to Christ and be received into the Church at Easter. If you're following the RCIA process, you'll go through a beautiful series of Gospel-based meditations during Lent, which is the time frame of this period.
- **Initiation** itself, the culmination of the whole process! You're received into the Church during the Easter Vigil Mass, where you'll receive the sacraments of initiation: baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist. (If you've already been baptized, you won't be baptized again.)
- **Mystagogy:** after reception into the Church at Easter, this period lets you reflect and learn more about the mysteries of the Mass and the Sacraments that you now participate in fully.

Below is a discussion of each of these Catholic RCIA stages.

But first, some basics...

Laying a strong foundation

Faith will be the foundation of your life.

Make that foundation solid!

Go slowly; make sure you've developed the basics well. That will help you avoid discouragement and frustration, two big enemies of faith development.

Also be aware of the importance of orthodoxy in the information/formation you receive. ("Orthodoxy" here means "accurate and faithful" teaching.)

Make sure that you're satisfied with your own faith development in each of the RCIA stages before moving on to the next. Don't let pressure from anyone else make you move on.

RCIA stage 1: Just Looking

In the **inquiry** stage, you're just finding out about Jesus, Christianity, and the Catholic Church.

Your main task here is to explore and develop your faith enough so you can make an informed *initial* decision about entering the Catholic Church. The final decision won't come for a long time, when you actually enter the Church at Easter and receive the sacraments of initiation.

Even if you're past the inquirer stage, you should **still participate** in these sessions to make sure you've covered the right ground. You'll need to rely on that foundation later!

RCIA stage 2: Learning about the Faith

In the catechumenate, your faith has begun to develop. Now you need to learn and grow more.

You focus on **catechesis** in this stage: learning about the faith, how to live as a Christian, and developing your interior life.

Your job now is to come into closer contact with the Living God and learn more about the Catholic Faith.

RCIA stage 3: Getting ready for rebirth!

This period of **purification and enlightenment** is the final stage before receiving the Easter sacraments of initiation into the Church: baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist. (Those already baptized with a valid baptism in another Christian church aren't baptized again.)

This stage of intense **reflection** calls you to deeper **conversion** in preparation for your renewal at Easter. This is what the season of Lent is for, but it has a special intensity for you this year as you're entering the Church and receiving the sacraments of initiation. Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.

The Church uses three profound and beautiful passages from the Gospel of John to focus on this preparation effort.

RCIA stage 4: Reflecting on the mysteries of the Mass

This stage of **mystagogy** during Easter is for continued reflection on the sacraments you have received at Easter, especially the Eucharist.

Specific catechesis on the Mass, the Sacraments, and especially the Eucharist are the focus of this stage.

The Mass and the Eucharist are the "source and summit" of the Christian life in the Catholic Church, and this period is designed to help you understand, appreciate, and live more deeply this center of Catholicism.

That's a good overview of the Catholic RCIA stages, with more than enough supplemental information to think about for a while!

Remember that the Catholic RCIA stages are a good model of basic faith development, so you can learn a lot from them even if you're not in the RCIA process.

The RCIA process is for everyone who wishes to grow in communion and intimacy with our Lord Jesus Christ.

- If you are unbaptized you will need a godparent who is a fully initiated in the Catholic Church.
- If you are Baptize in another faith tradition we will need a copy of your baptism Certificate, you will also need a sponsor who is fully initiated in the Catholic Church.
- If you are a baptized Catholic over the age of eighteen who would like to complete your sacraments we will need a copy of your baptism certificate, and you will need a sponsor who is fully initiated in the Catholic Church.
- For children seven years and older we will need a copy of your birth certificate, and one godparent who is fully initiated in the Catholic Church.
- If you are the child's adoptive parents we will need a copy of the adoption documents and the child will need one godparent who is fully initiated in the Catholic Church.

Welcome to St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Community, we look forward to journeying with you on your sacred journey.

For more information, or to make an appointment please call or email Yvonne Bacchus. Tel. 760-564-1255, email, ybacchus@stfrancis-lq.org

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in us the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and we shall be created and you will renew the face of the earth.

O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit instructs the hearts of the faithful, grant that by that same Spirit we may be ever wise and rejoice in His consolations, through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.