

An Overview of the RCIA

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

Catechumen

One who has not been baptized and desires to be baptized and confirmed as a Catholic.

Period of Precatechumenate

An informal time for asking questions toward deciding whether or not one wants to become Catholic.

Rite of Acceptance

The inquirer's parish acknowledges his or her desire to become Catholic, welcoming him or her into the community. At this point the inquirer becomes a **catechumen**.

Period of Catechumenate

A time of formal Scripture study and instruction.

Rite of Sending on the First Sunday of Lent

The catechumen's parish recognizes that he or she is ready to become a full member of the Catholic Church, sending the catechumen to the bishop for his acceptance.

Rite of Election on the First Sunday of Lent

The bishop recognizes God's election of the catechumens, recognizing their desire and acknowledges their readiness to become full members of the Catholic Church. At this point each catechumen becomes a member of the **elect**.

Period of Purification and Enlightenment during Lent

A period of prayer and reflection in preparation for the sacraments. The community prays over the elect and presents him or her with a copy of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, signs of growing faith.

The Sacraments of Initiation often at the Easter Vigil

The elect receives the sacraments of baptism, Confirmation, and [first] Communion.

The former catechumen is now a full member of the Catholic Church; such a newly initiated member is called a **neophyte**.

Mystagogia

A time of continuing reflection and growth formally lasting through the end of the **Easter Season**, but in some sense lasting throughout the entirety of all Catholic's lives.

Candidate

One who has been baptized and wishes to be confirmed as a Catholic.

Period of Precatechumenate

An informal time for asking questions toward deciding whether or not one wants to become Catholic.

Rite of Welcoming

The inquirer's parish acknowledges his or her desire to become Catholic, welcoming him or her into the community. At this point the inquirer becomes a **candidate** for confirmation.

Period of Catechumenate

A time of formal Scripture study and instruction.

Rite of Sending Candidates for Recognition on the First Sunday of Lent

The candidate's parish recognizes that he or she is ready to become a full member of the Catholic Church, sending the candidate to the bishop for his recognition of their desire.

Rite of Calling the Candidates to Continuing Conversion on the First Sunday of Lent

The bishop recognizes the candidate's desire and acknowledges his or her readiness to become a full member of the Catholic Church. As a baptized person, the candidate is already among the elect before becoming a candidate.

Period of Purification and Enlightenment during Lent

A period of prayer and reflection in preparation for the sacraments.

The Sacraments of Initiation often at the Easter Vigil

The candidate receives the sacraments of confirmation and [first] Communion. The former candidate is now a full member of the Catholic Church.

Mystagogia

A time of continuing reflection and growth formally lasting through the end of the **Easter Season**, but in some sense lasting throughout the entirety of all Catholic's lives.