

Once a person has been baptized he or she becomes a “neophyte,” which means “beginner” or “novice”. The fourth and final period, called *Mystagogia*, lasts seven weeks, and ends at Pentecost in late May/early June. This is a time to reflect on the sacraments, especially Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist, and the vital role they play in the Christian life.



Individuals who were baptized in another Christian church do not necessarily have to go through the RCIA process in order to become Catholic, but many do because the process is so rewarding.

If you were baptized in another church you may be received into the Catholic Church at any time, although some instruction should be expected. The amount of instruction will depend on how active you’ve been and your knowledge of the Catholic faith. Talk to the pastor or director of RCIA for more information.



Our Lady of Guadalupe
Patroness of the Diocese of Sacramento

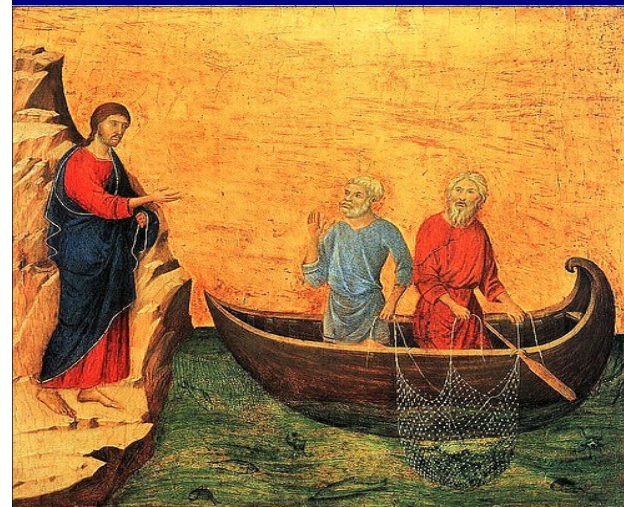
For more information about RCIA or how to become Catholic, contact the Pastor or Director of Religious Education at a parish near you, or call the number below for assistance.

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DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO
Office of Worship

HOW DO I BECOME CATHOLIC?

Understanding the RCIA Process



*“Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness,
but will have the light of life.”
- John 8:12*

Welcome to the Catholic Church!



St. Peter's Basilica, Rome

The Catholic Church was founded by Jesus Christ when he said to Peter: "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church" (Matthew 16:18). Normally, most people become Catholic through what's called the "Baptismal Catechumenate," or The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults—RCIA for short.

The Catechumenate dates back to first century when Christianity was in its infancy. It flourished in the 4th and 5th centuries but gradually disappeared as Europe became Christian.

The catechumenate was revived in the 1960s in order to more effectively evangelize the world and meet the needs of a rapidly growing Church in Africa and Asia and elsewhere.

RCIA is not a program, but a gradual process in which one who, after coming to know Christ freely chooses to follow him by entering the life of faith in the Holy Catholic Church.



The calling of St. Peter

RCIA consists of four periods: (1) the period of Inquiry, or pre-catechumenate (2) the *Catechumenate* (3) Purification & Enlightenment, and (4) *Mystagogy*. The first period, the period of **Inquiry** can begin anytime, although in most parishes formal sessions usually start in September.

Inquiry focuses on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ as found in the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) which reveal the true face of Christ. While the period of inquiry can last any length of time, it normally lasts two or three months. There is *absolutely no commitment expected* at this time. It's simply a time to listen and ask questions. And to pray, seeking God's will.

After this introductory period the first major step takes place, which is called the **Rite of Acceptance**. This marks the formal beginning of instruction called the "catechumenate." At this point catechumens become part of the household of Christ as the Church embraces them with a mother's love and concern. During this period you will learn about Catholic beliefs and practices while you discern if God is calling you to become Catholic.

The catechumenate, like the period of inquiry can last any length of time, although it normally lasts one year, following the adage: "You have to experience an Easter to have an Easter."



The **Rite of Election** is the next step in the process. It marks the beginning of the third period called **Purification & Enlightenment**. This period coincides with the season of **Lent** in early spring. This is a special time to deepen your relationship with Christ through prayer and reflection as you prepare for the sacraments of initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Communion at the Easter Vigil.