

# Journey of Faith



## In Short:

- Each rite in the RCIA includes a period of preparation.
- There are different rites for catechumens and candidates.
- Each rite marks a significant step in the growing commitment to Christ.



## Periods and Rites

While each person's journey of faith is unique, the Church has established some standard steps marked by rites. Each rite is preceded by a period or stage during which participants receive the formation needed to fully celebrate the coming rite.

The RCIA rites take place at the beginning of Mass or after the homily. You'll stand near the altar with your sponsor and respond to the priest's questions. You may be nervous, so please listen to the words of the prayers as the community prays for you.

## The RCIA Process and Rites

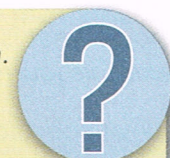
You've been exploring what it means to be Catholic—both in your relationship with God and in your life—and you have committed to taking the next step in the RCIA process.

The rites mark significant steps along this RCIA journey. Your RCIA team and sponsor will be by your side, guiding you. Members of the parish will support you through their encouragement and example. And you'll continue to make connections with others who are also traveling this path toward initiation into the Catholic Church.

*"As [John the Baptist] watched Jesus walk by, he said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God.' The two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following him and said to them, 'What are you looking for?' They said to him, 'Rabbi' (which translated means Teacher), 'where are you staying?' He said to them, 'Come, and you will see.'"*

John 1:36–39

- *You are on the path of conversion. How have you grown since the beginning of the RCIA process?*



## Inquiry

As you moved through the inquiry period, you began to follow Jesus more earnestly, came to know his teachings and love more fully, and shared them with others.

### Rite: Acceptance

The **rite of acceptance** brings those desiring baptism into the order of catechumens. The rite introduces you to the parish community as members welcome you and pledge their prayers and support. You express your intention to follow the way of Christ, and your sponsor affirms your sincerity and ongoing conversion. As a catechumen, you will continue to grow in faith through study, reflection on the word of God, and prayer.

1. As the rite begins, you may stand at the church doors to symbolize your desire to enter the community.
2. The priest introduces you by name to those gathered and asks, "What do you ask of the Church?" You answer, "Faith," indicating your intention to live, learn, and love according to Christ's call and example.
3. The priest asks your sponsor to accept his or her role and then marks the sign of the cross on your forehead, symbolizing the love and strength of Christ that accompanies you. (An optional signing of other senses includes ears, eyes, lips, heart, shoulders, hands, and feet.)
4. The priest formally invites you to enter the church and participate in the Liturgy of the Word. (After the petitions, the RCIA group may be dismissed to reflect more deeply on the word of God.)

### Rite: Welcoming

If you're already baptized, you enter the catechumenate period as a **candidate** through the **rite of welcoming**. This rite may be celebrated separately or may be combined with the rite of acceptance.

- Who or what is helping you as you make this journey?
- In what specific ways are you growing in your relationship with Christ?



## Catechumenate

The catechumenate period is a time of focused learning on topics related to Catholic belief and practice, training you in the Christian life. It is a time of "more intense preparation for the sacraments of initiation" (RCIA chapter of *The Rites, Volume One* [RCIA], 6).

*"[Jesus] saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the customs post. He said to him, 'Follow me.' And leaving everything behind, he got up and followed him."*

Luke 5:27–28

### Rite: Election

Your parish may have a rite of sending to offer their prayers and support as you prepare to travel to your diocesan cathedral for the rite of election. During the rite of election you'll be presented to the bishop or his delegate.

The **rite of election**, usually celebrated on the first Sunday of Lent, affirms your readiness for the sacraments of initiation. You become a member of the **elect**, indicating you have been chosen—elected—by God and the Church. During the rite of election:

1. Your godparent(s) affirm your readiness, and the worshiping community voices its approval.
2. The celebrant asks if you wish to enter the Church. With the other catechumens, you answer, "We do."



3. At either the rite of sending or the rite of election, you sign your name in the *Book of the Elect*, expressing your “wish to enter fully into the life of the Church through the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist” at Easter (RCIA 553).

4. The community prays for the elect, and the bishop offers a special blessing.

If you are already baptized, you will celebrate a rite named the call to continuing conversion.

*“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name: you are mine.”*

Isaiah 43:1

## Purification and Enlightenment

Usually coinciding with the season of Lent, this period is a time of reflection that focuses on your conversion as one of the elect, preparing to celebrate the Easter sacraments. Minor rites—such as the **scrutinies**, **presentation of the Creed**, and **presentation of the Lord’s Prayer**—occur during this time, often at Sunday Mass.

*“Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.”*

Matthew 16:24

## Rites: Sacraments of Initiation

The Easter Vigil Mass is the “holy night,” the “truly blessed night,” the “night of grace” (The Easter Proclamation [Exsultet], *The Roman Missal*). The Church keeps vigil for the resurrection of Jesus and celebrates the central mysteries of our faith.

The elect are fully initiated into the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil Mass through reception of the sacraments of initiation. You will be baptized, sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit in confirmation, and receive Eucharist for the first time. From this point, if you are newly baptized, you will be called a **neophyte** (Greek for “newly planted”). If you have already been baptized, you will make a profession of faith and celebrate confirmation and Eucharist.

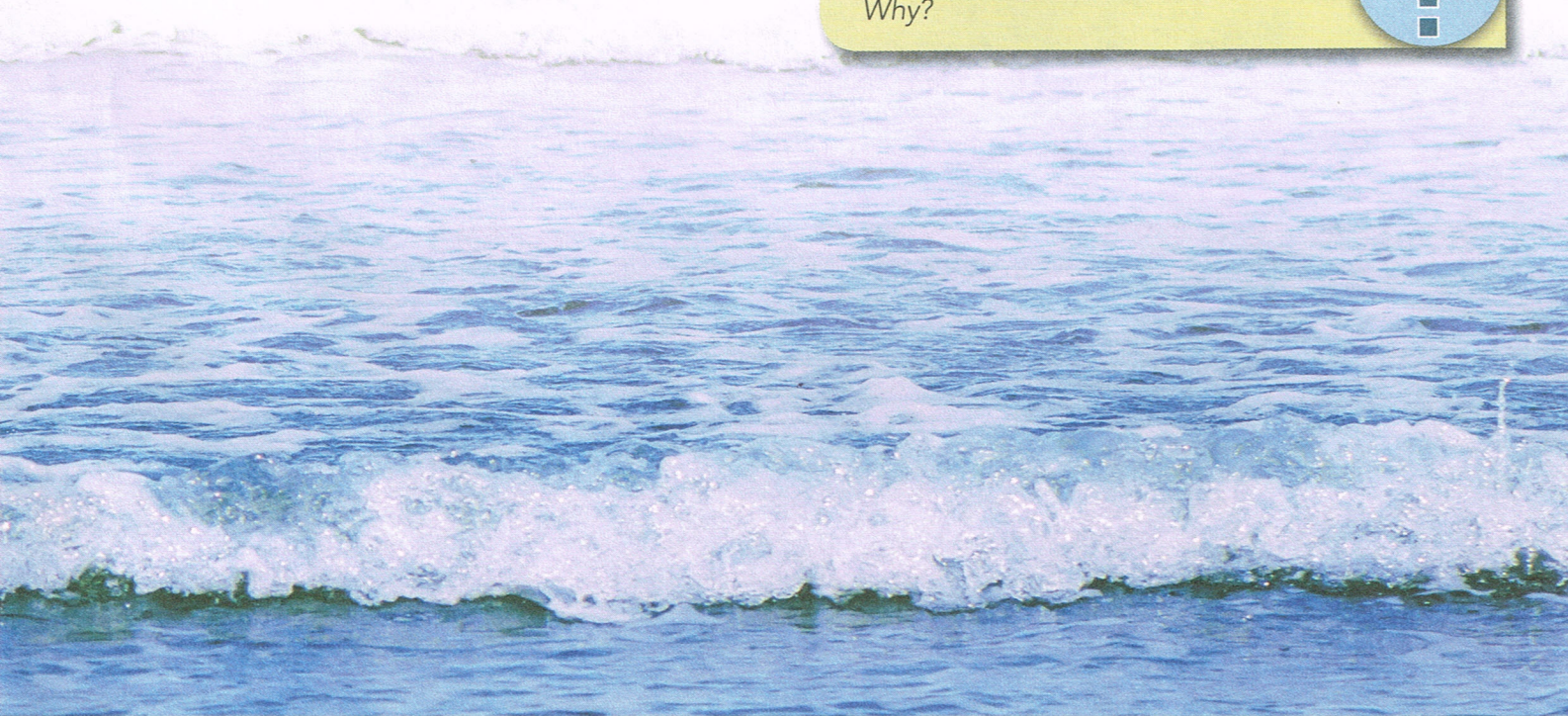
*“This is the night, when Christ broke the prison-bars of death and rose victorious from the underworld.”*

*The Easter Proclamation [Exsultet], The Roman Missal*

## Mystagogy

Initiation isn’t the end; it begins your new life and the period of mystagogy. During the Easter season, you will experience being a full member of the Catholic Christian community. You will participate in the Sunday Eucharist and reflect on the meaning of the Easter sacraments.

- What part of, or moment in, this process interests you most? Why?



## Your Journey of Faith

Create a timeline to represent your individual journey of faith. Mark and list a few (three to five) important moments or phases along your way.



Read and reflect on the Emmaus story in Luke's Gospel (24:13–35). It focuses on being open to recognize Jesus and on sharing the good news. This power comes from the eucharistic table: "He was made known to them in the breaking of the bread" (Luke 24:35).

- *Take time to reflect on your faith journey so far. What are your hopes and expectations as you continue along the path toward initiation?*
- *In what ways is your relationship with God changing as you seek him more fully?*
- *How can the Church and sacraments empower you to respond to Christ's call to live as a disciple?*

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