

Frequently Asked Questions about the RCIA Process at Saint John Neumann

The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA) is a liturgical rite of the Roman Catholic Church. The rite calls for a process that offers individuals who may wish to enter into the Catholic Church an opportunity to examine the faith in a friendly, relaxed atmosphere. At St. John Neumann this process is conducted by a team of lay parishioners and clergy, and new participants are welcomed at any time during the year.

RCIA is not a course or class in Catholicism. Rather, it is a gradual, guided process of formation and conversion leading participants towards initiation into the Catholic Church. Initiation into the Church is marked by the celebration of three sacraments as needed: Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Eucharist.

Who is RCIA for?

First, RCIA is for those adults who have not been baptized in a Christian faith tradition. Through prayer, reflection, and participation in liturgy you will enter into the Christian church through Baptism. Easter is the usual time for adult Baptism in the Catholic Church. At the time of your Baptism you will complete your initiation into the Catholic Church by celebrating the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist.

Second, RCIA is for those adults who have been baptized in another Christian denomination. Through a period of formation that includes prayer and participation in liturgy you may be received into full communion of the Catholic Church by a Profession of Faith and the celebration of the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist.



Third, RCIA is for those adults who have been baptized in the Catholic Church but have not celebrated the other sacraments of initiation. The celebration of Confirmation and Eucharist will complete your journey into the Church.

Those who have been baptized are asked to provide St. John Neumann with a copy of an official record of the Baptism—it may be a certificate given at the time, or may be in the form of a letter from the congregation or parish where it took place. Please let us know if you have difficulty in obtaining this record.

When does RCIA meet?

The initial period of the RCIA process is called **Inquiry**, wherein participants explore the beginnings of their faith journey. Inquiry sessions are held Tuesday evenings from 7:30 to 8:30pm at the parish.

After a period of discernment, participants may then join the **Catechumenate**, wherein the teachings of the Catholic Church are discussed within the context of prayer and the liturgy. Catechumenate sessions take place Tuesday evenings from 7:30 to 9:00pm at the parish. Those in the Catechumenate also participate in the Rite of Dismissal, which takes place each Sunday at the 9:30am Mass. Following the homily, participants are “dismissed” from the liturgy with the prayers of the assembly to reflect further on the day’s scripture readings.

After celebrating the sacraments of initiation, participants experience the period of **Mystagogy**, wherein they reflect on their journeys and become familiar with parish ministries. Mystagogy also meets Tuesday evenings, from 7:30 to 9:00pm at the church.

Faith formation as experienced in RCIA is a personal journey of prayer, study, and reflection. Because of the nature of the RCIA process, and to respect others' journeys, we ask RCIA participants not to be accompanied to sessions by friends, fiancés, or family members.



How long does it take to become Catholic?

Because each person's faith journey is unique, it is difficult to give a time frame. RCIA is not a course of study, but a gradual process of formation and conversion which cannot be rushed. If you have not been baptized, the process, at a minimum, takes a full year. Adult Baptism is celebrated at the Easter Vigil Mass. If you already have been baptized, you may require less time depending on the faith formation you previously received and your present involvement in the practice of your faith. We want to listen to your needs and

wishes, as well as to offer you the opportunity fully to discern God's call at this important moment in your life. Time is needed for your faith formation. All we ask is that you be open to the process.

I am getting married. Will I complete RCIA by then?

The timeline of a faith journey does not always coincide with that of a wedding. If you are engaged, the deepening of your relationship with your fiancé and the preparation for your wedding takes time. The deepening of your relationship with God and the Church community and the preparation for your celebrating the sacraments of initiation also takes time. It may or may not be possible for both journeys to arrive at a particular calendar date at the same time. We happily will work with you, but please note that you need not be Catholic in order to marry a Catholic in the Church.

I have been through a divorce. Will this affect my becoming Catholic?

If you have been divorced and not remarried, this will not stand in the way of your becoming Catholic. If you have been divorced and remarried (or are engaged) there is a process by which the Catholic Church may nullify your previous marriage, and through which your current marriage can be recognized in the Church. The parish will work with you through this process, which may affect your length of time in RCIA.

I have children and teens that aren't members of the Church either. What about them?

St. John Neumann has both a Children's and a Teen's Catechumenate process for those aged 9 to 18. Contact the parish's Director of Religious Education, Mary Lyons (703-860-8510 x340, mlyons@saintjn.org) for details.



Is there any cost to participate in RCIA?

No, there is no charge to participate. We will provide you with all necessary materials.

**What is a sponsor?**

A sponsor is an active St. John Neumann parishioner who is willing to be a friend, a listener, and a guide, and who will participate in RCIA with you. The RCIA Team will assign a sponsor to accompany you on your faith journey, although you may recommend a parishioner to us. Sponsors need to be practicing Catholic members of the St. John Neumann parish community. The RCIA Team prefers that fiancés and family members do not serve as sponsors.

What if I get started and decide this isn't for me?

Faith in God and the decision to become a member of the Catholic Church are personal choices that must be made in an atmosphere of complete freedom. We will try our best to help you understand what it means to be a Catholic Christian. However, we believe that you must be allowed to use God's gifts of conscience and free will without feeling any pressure from us.

How do I get started?

St. John Neumann welcomes new RCIA participants at any time during the year. Please contact the parish's Director of Religious Education, Mary Lyons (703-860-8510 x340, mlyons@saintjn.org) to set up an informational meeting.