

RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION (RCIA) - WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

1. It is a requirement of the Catholic church that (an unbaptized) person needs to complete a **Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) (or children's) (RCIC)** programme before one can be baptized.
2. The RCIA programme starts each year around August/September and covers an 8-month period of study, reflection, and prayer. At the conclusion of the programme, candidates are baptized in April the following year at the Easter Vigil Mass.
3. Sessions (referred to as *catechesis*) are held weekly on Sunday mornings. Candidates attend Mass and then are dismissed and proceed to meeting rooms for a 30-40-minute session. Adults and children meet separately. Candidates are expected to attend **all** sessions unless they have a good reason not to do so. All sessions are in English. Sessions are usually not held on public and school holidays.
4. Briefly the RCIA programme has **4** main parts –
 - ❖ The emphasis of the **Period of Evangelisation and Precatechumenate** (or the **Enquiry Period**) is on welcoming the enquirers seeking answers to any questions they have, helping them to recognise the call of God in their lives and giving them a taste of what it is to be part of the Catholic Church. This period concludes with a liturgical celebration, **Rite of Acceptance** at which candidates declare their intention in a public rite to become members of the Church. It marks the transition from the Enquiry period to the next phase of their faith journey.
 - ❖ The **Period of the Catechumenate**, the *second* phase, is a time the candidates with the help of catechists and sponsors, strive to deepen their faith as they prepare for the **Rite of Election**. The Rite of Election is celebrated in the presence of the bishop on the First Sunday of Lent. The rite marks the journey from the Period of Catechumenate to the period of Purification and Enlightenment.
 - ❖ **The Period of Purification and Enlightenment**, the *third* phase takes place during the period of Lent. It is a time of reflection in preparation for the celebration of the sacraments of initiation at the Easter Vigil Mass. The elect are baptized, confirmed, and welcomed to the Table of the Eucharist for the first time at Easter. Candidates (already baptized in another Christian denomination) are welcomed into Full Communion with the Catholic church through a formal profession of the Catholic faith, Confirmed and are welcomed to the Table of the Eucharist. Catechumens need a sponsor/godparent for their baptism. They may also choose to have a baptismal saints name.
 - ❖ **The Period of Mystagogia** is the *fourth* and final phase of the RCIA programme and takes place between Easter and Pentecost. At this time the new Catholics reflect on their faith journey and prepare for continuation in the midst of the People of God. ❀