

# Steps of RCIA Process

## What are the steps of RCIA?

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This outline is based upon the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) approved for use in the dioceses of the USA, which includes additional rites for various circumstances and combinations.

## Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate

This is also known as the Period of Inquiry. During this period, teaching is given to people who are interested in learning more about the Catholic Faith. The sessions cover basic information about the Faith and fundamentally communicate the [Gospel of Jesus Christ](#). The church is offering here an invitation to initial conversion. There is no obligation involved in attending these meetings—they are intended to help a person decide whether they want to continue learning about the Faith. Attendees at this stage are known as Inquirers.

## First Step: Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens

The Inquirers who wish to continue now move onto the next stage, which is known as the Period of the **Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens**. As they enter this Rite they are known as Inquirers. As they leave this Rite they are now referred to as [Catechumens](#).

Such rites may take place throughout the year, but most often take place

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during [Advent](#) and the month before it (October through December). By this time, Catechumens must have in mind someone who would be willing to “sponsor” them. The sponsors are usually practicing Catholics that the Catechumens know. The duties of a sponsor are to go with them through the various rites, and provide individual instruction about matters of faith.

This is a very significant step, so much so that for Catechumens (un-baptized): “One who dies during the Catechumenate receives a Christian burial.”[47] □ *From the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*

This is the first rite that takes place at the beginning of the general Sunday [Mass](#) in front of the parish community.

The outline of this Rite is as follows [Paragraphs 48 - 68]:

### ***Receiving the Candidates***

Greeting (often with the RCIA teacher knocking at the door of the church and asking the congregation to allow the Catechumens to enter)

Open Dialogue

Candidates First Acceptance of the [Gospel](#)

Affirmation by the Sponsors and the Assembly

Signing of the Candidates with the [Cross](#):

- Signing of the Forehead □ - [Signing of the Other Senses] - optional □ -

Concluding [Prayer](#)

- Invitation to the Celebration of the Word of God

The mass then goes on as normal with: ***Liturgy of the Word***

- Instruction
- Readings
- [Homily](#)
- [Presentation of a [Bible](#)] - optional
- Intercessions for the Catechumens
- Prayer over the Catechumens

At this point a new portion is added

- Dismissal of the Catechumens

From this point until their baptisms, [catechumens](#) are dismissed after the liturgy of the word when they attend mass at the parish at which they had the rite of accepting. This is to make the process feel more like it was in the early church, when Christian converts were dismissed before communion before their baptism, which often took years to prepare for, largely to make the communion more secret and more meaningful:

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## The Rite of Welcoming the Candidates

The Inquirers who have already been validly baptized in another **non-Catholic ecclesial community**, or baptized Catholic but not confirmed as a child, are welcomed to this next stage via the **Rite of Welcoming the Candidates**. They enter this Rite known as Candidates, and they are known by this title from now on. Their rite of acceptance often does not take place at the same time as the Catechumen's rite of acceptance. The candidates' rite generally takes place during **Lent**.

The outline of this Rite is as follows:

### ***Receiving the Candidates***

- Salutation
- Opening Dialogue
- Candidates' Declaration Of Intent
- Affirmation by the Sponsors and the Assembly
- Signation of the Candidates with the Cross:
  - Signing of the Forehead□- [Signing of the Other Senses] - optional□-
- Concluding Prayer

The Mass then goes on as normal: ***Liturgy of the Word***

- Instruction
  - Readings
  - Homily
  - [Presentation of a Bible] - optional
  - Profession of Faith
  - General Intercessions
- (At this point there is a special prayer over the candidates)

- [Dismissal of the Assembly] - if the Eucharist is not to be celebrated

### ***Liturgy of the Eucharist***

Unlike Catechumens, candidates are never dismissed during the Mass.

## The Combined Rite

Where there are both unbaptized and baptized Inquirers in a Parish there is the option of a combined Rite at this stage. This Rite is formally known as **The (Combined) Celebration of the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens and the Rite of Welcoming Baptized but Previously Uncatechized Adults Who are Preparing for Confirmation and/or Eucharist or Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church.**

The outline of this Rite is as follows:

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## ***Receiving the Candidates***

- Greeting
- Opening Dialogue with Candidates for the Catechumenate and with the Candidates for Post-baptismal [Catechesis](#)
- Catechumens' First Acceptance of the Gospel
- Candidates' Declaration of Intent
- Affirmation by the Sponsors and the Assembly
- Signing of the Catechumens and of the Candidates with the Cross:
  - Signing of the Forehead of the Catechumens☐- [Signing of the Other Senses of the Catechumens] - optional☐- Signing of the Forehead of the Candidates☐- [Signing of the Other Senses of the Candidates] - optional☐-
- Concluding Prayer
- Invitation to the Celebration of the Word of God

## ***Liturgy of the Word***

- Instruction
- Readings
- Homily
- [Presentation of a Bible] - optional
- Intercessions
- Prayer over the Catechumens and Candidates
- Dismissal of the Catechumens

## ***Liturgy of the Eucharist***

These Rites delineate the transition between the Period of Inquiry into the Period of the Catechumenate. The Rites take place when the members of the local Church are gathered together to celebrate [Holy Mass](#).

## **Period of the Catechumenate**

A [Catechumen](#) (from Latin *catechumenus*, Greek *κατηχουμενος*, *instructed*) is one receiving instruction in the principles of the Christian religion with a view to baptism. It is for this reason that those who are already validly baptized in another Christian Faith are not known as Catechumens, but rather Candidates.☐☐ The Catechumenate is an extended period during which the candidates are given suitable pastoral formation and guidance, aimed at training them in the Christian life.

This is achieved in four ways {paraphrased}:

- Suitable catechesis; solidly supported by celebrations of the Word.
- The Catechumens learning to:
  - Turn more readily to God in prayer☐- To bear witness to the Faith☐- In all things to keep their hopes set on Christ☐- To follow supernatural

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inspiration in their deeds□- To practice the love of neighbor, even at the cost of self-renunciation

- Suitable liturgical rites, which purify the Catechumens little by little and strengthen them with God's blessing; including celebrations of the Word.
- Learning to work actively with others to spread the Gospel.

*From the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*□□. The period of the Catechumenate is a time for:

- Continuing to build community within the group
- Getting more involved in parish activities, getting to know the parish community
- Learning about the basic teachings and beliefs of the Catholic Church
- Exploring important and foundational Scripture passages

More importantly, it is a time for:

- Continuing to examine God's presence in our lives, past and present
- Developing prayer life, entering into the communal worship of the parish
- Fostering conversion
- Developing or improving our relationship with God

Various Rites pertain to this period of instruction for those who are unbaptized (Catechumens):

- Celebrations of the Word of God
- Minor [Exorcisms](#)
- [Blessings](#) of the Catechumens
- [Anointing](#) of the Catechumens
- Presentations {Optional}
- Sending of the Catechumens for Election (a meeting with the Bishop of Catechumens from many Parishes throughout a Diocese) {Optional}

An optional Rite also pertains to this period for those who are baptized (Candidates):

- Rite of Sending the Candidates for Recognition by the Bishop and for the Call to Continuing Conversion [434 - 445]

There is also a combined optional Rite if there are both Catechumens and Candidates in a Parish:

- Parish Celebration for Sending Catechumens for Election and Candidates for Recognition by the Bishop

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The conclusion of this Period leads onto the **Rite of Election or Enrolment of Names** for those who are unbaptized and the **Rite of Calling the Candidates to Continuing Conversion** for those who are baptized. This is a very significant and important step in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. It is usually celebrated on the first Sunday of lent at the local [diocesan cathedral](#), led by the local [bishop](#). All of the Catechumens and Candidates, their [Godparents](#) (for Catechumens) and Sponsors (for Catechumens and Candidates) gather together on this day. It often involves hundreds of people coming together for this occasion. The Church formally ratifies the Catechumens' readiness for the [Sacraments](#) of Initiation, and the Candidates' readiness to be received into full Communion with the Catholic Church. In turn the Catechumens - from now on known as the Elect - publicly acknowledge their desire to receive the Sacraments of Initiation, and the Candidates' their desire to be received into full Communion with the Catholic Church.

### **Second Step: Election or Enrollment of Names**

The outline of this Rite is as follows:

#### ***Liturgy of the Word***

- Homily
- Presentation of the Catechumens
- Affirmation by the Godparents [and the Assembly]
- Invitation and Enrollment of Names
- Act of Admission or Election
- Intercessions for the Elect
- Prayer over the Elect
- Dismissal of the Elect

#### ***Liturgy of the Eucharist***

This rite does not have to be a full mass. In this case, there is no liturgy of the eucharist, and thus no dismissal of the elect.

### **Rite of Calling the Candidates to Continuing Conversion**

The outline of this rite is as follows [450 - 458]:

#### ***Liturgy of the Word***

- Homily
- Presentation of the Candidates for Confirmation and Eucharist
- Affirmation by the Sponsors [and the Assembly]
- Act of Recognition
- General Intercessions

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- Prayer over the Candidates
- [Dismissal of the Assembly] – if the Eucharist is not to be celebrated  
***Liturgy of the Eucharist***

## **The Combined Rite**

Where there are both Catechumens (unbaptized) and Candidates (baptized) in a Diocese there is the option of a combined Rite at this stage. This Rite is formally known as **The (Combined) Celebration of the Rite of Election of Catechumens and the Call to Continuing Conversion of Candidates Who are Preparing for Confirmation and/or Eucharist or Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church.**

The outline of this Rite is as follows:

### ***Celebration of Election***

- Presentation of the Catechumens
- Affirmation by the Godparents [and the Assembly]
- Invitation and Enrollment of Names
- Act of Admission or Election

### ***Celebration of the Call to Continuing Conversion***

- Presentation of the Candidates
- Affirmation by the Sponsors [and the Assembly]
- Act of Recognition
- Intercessions for the Elect and the Candidates
- Prayer over the Elect and the Candidates
- Dismissal of the Elect

### ***Liturgy of the Eucharist***

## **Period of Purification and Enlightenment**

This period tends to correspond with [Lent](#) and is intended to be a period of increased introspection and coming closer to God. The aim of this period is to eliminate what is weak and sinful, and affirm what is holy. During this period the Elect undertake a number of Rites, including the Scrutinies and Presentations:

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The outlines of these Rites are as follows:

## **First Scrutiny (3rd Sunday of Lent):**

### ***Liturgy of the Word***

- Readings
- [Homily](#)
- Invitation to Private [Prayer](#)
- Intercessions for the Elect
- Exorcism
- Dismissal of the Elect

## ***Liturgy of the Eucharist* □ □ The Presentation of the Creed (3rd Week of Lent):**

### ***Liturgy of the Word***

- Readings
- Homily
- Presentation of the [Creed](#)
- Prayer over the Elect
- Dismissal of the Elect

### ***Liturgy of the Eucharist***

## **Second Scrutiny (4th Sunday of Lent):**

### ***Liturgy of the Word***

- Readings
- Homily
- Invitation to Private Prayer
- Intercessions for the Elect
- Exorcism
- Dismissal of the Elect

### ***Liturgy of the Eucharist***

## **Third Scrutiny (5th Sunday of Lent):**

### ***Liturgy of the Word***

- Readings
- Homily
- Invitation to Private Prayer
- Intercessions for the Elect
- Exorcism
- Dismissal of the Elect

### ***Liturgy of the Eucharist***



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## The Presentation of the Lord's Prayer:

### *Liturgy of the Word*

- Readings
- Homily
- Gospel (Presentation of the [Lord's Prayer](#))
- Homily
- Prayer over the Elect
- Dismissal of the Elect

### *Liturgy of the Eucharist*

## Preparation Rites on Holy Saturday:

- Recitation of the Creed □- Ephphetha □- Choosing a Baptismal Name Concluding Rites

The Candidates meanwhile prepare for the Sacrament of Reconciliation with an optional **Penitential Rite Scrutiny**. This takes place on the 2nd Sunday of Lent.

## The Easter Vigil

At the [Easter Vigil](#) the celebration of the [sacraments](#) of initiation takes place. The Sacraments of [Baptism](#), [Confirmation](#), and [Holy Communion](#); if one is a candidate, [confession](#) will already have been made prior to the vigil. The Elect celebrate all of these while the Candidates (having already been baptized) only celebrate Confirmation and the Eucharist. The Elect are now called Neophytes, and they are considered to be full members of the Christian faithful.

The Rites used to confer these Sacraments are outlined below. These Rites can also be celebrated outside of the Easter Vigil, however, this should be exceptional for the un-baptized. The circumstances for the baptized candidates are more flexible. At some college campuses that have spring breaks during Holy Week, initiation for both the baptized and the un-baptized is often done during the weeks after Easter, so more of the community can be present.

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## Third Step: Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation

The **Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation** is the Rite undertaken by the Elect (un-baptized).

The outline of this Rite is as follows:

### ***Liturgy of the Word***

#### ***Celebration of Baptism***

- Presentation of the Elect
- Invitation to Prayer
- Litany of the Saints
- Blessing of the Baptismal Waters
- Profession of Faith:
  - Renunciation of Sin☐- Profession of the Catholic Faith by the Catechumens and Candidates
- Baptism
- Explanatory Rites:
  - [Anointing after Baptism] - if Confirmation is separated from the Catechumen's Baptism☐- [Clothing with a Baptismal Garment] - optional☐- Presentation of a Lighted Candle

#### ***Celebration of Confirmation***

- Invitation
- Laying on of Hands
- Anointing with Chrism

The confirmation can take place at the same time as the baptism, by anointing with the oil immediately after the pouring of the water.

***[Renewal of Baptismal Promises (at the Easter Vigil)]*** for the congregation

- Invitation
- Renewal of Baptismal Promises:
  - Renunciation of Sin☐- Profession of Faith
- Sprinkling with Baptismal Water

#### ***Liturgy of the Eucharist***

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### **The Rite of Reception of Baptized Christians into the full Communion of the Catholic Church**

The Rite of Reception of Baptized Christians into the full Communion of the Catholic Church is the Rite undertaken by the Candidates (baptized).

The outline of this Rite (within Holy Mass) is as follows:

#### ***Liturgy of the Word***

- Readings
- Homily

#### ***Celebration of Reception***

- Invitation
- Profession of Faith
- Act of Reception
- [Confirmation]: - omitted if the Candidate has already been Confirmed
- Laying on of Hands □ - Anointing with Chrism
- Celebrant's Sign of Welcome
- General Intercessions
- Sign of Peace

#### ***Liturgy of the Eucharist***

### **The Combined Rite**

Where there are both Elect (un-baptized) and Candidates (baptized) in a Parish there is the option of a combined Rite at this stage. This Rite is formally known as **The (Combined) Celebration at the Easter Vigil of the Sacraments of Initiation and of the Rite of Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church.**

The outline of this rite is as follows:

#### ***Service of Light***

#### ***Liturgy of the Word***

#### ***Celebration of Baptism***

- Presentation of the Elect
- Invitation to Prayer
- Litany of the Saints
- Prayer over the Water
- Profession of Faith:
  - Renunciation of Sin □ - Profession of Faith
- Baptism
- Explanatory Rites

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- [Anointing after Baptism] - if Confirmation is separated from the Catechumen's Baptism□- [Clothing with a Baptismal Garment]- optional□- Presentation of a Lighted Candle

### ***Renewal of Baptismal Promises***

- Invitation
- Renewal of Baptismal Promises:
  - Renunciation of Sin□- Profession of Faith
- Sprinkling with Baptismal Water

### ***Celebration of Reception***

- Invitation
- Profession by the Candidates
- Act of reception

### ***Celebration of Confirmation***

- Invitation
- Laying on of Hands
- Anointing with Chrism

### ***Liturgy of the Eucharist***