

## **Frequently Asked Questions about the RCIA**

### **How long does the RCIA process take?**

As long as it needs to. According to the Church's guidelines, the RCIA "*varies according to the many forms of God's grace, the free cooperation of the individuals, the action of the Church, and the circumstances of time and place.*" In other words, it is not designed to be a one-size-fits-all process. Some will be ready to receive the sacraments in a matter of months; others may choose to spend several years in preparation. The most common pattern is to begin the process in the summer or fall and receive the sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist) at Easter.

### **I was baptized in another Christian denomination. Do I need to be re-baptized?**

No. As long as you were baptized with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, then your baptism is valid. We consider all baptized Christians to be members of our extended family, including those from whom we are unfortunately separated at the present time.

### **Do I have to wait until Easter to receive the sacraments of initiation?**

If you have not been baptized, yes; if you are already baptized, no. Barring emergencies or exceptional circumstances, all baptisms of adults will take place at the Easter Vigil. Adults who are already baptized, however, may be confirmed and received into the Catholic Church whenever they are ready.

### **I am divorced. Can I still become Catholic?**

If you are divorced but not remarried, there is nothing to prevent you from receiving the sacraments. If you are remarried *or your spouse is remarried*, you will need to seek an annulment of all previous marriages (yours and/or your spouse's) through the Metropolitan Tribunal. Our parish clergy and staff will be available to guide you through this process. For more information, please visit <http://www.archatl.com/offices/tribunal/marriagecases.html>

### **I made my First Communion as a child but was never confirmed. Is the RCIA for me?**

Not really. Our parish offers separate preparation classes for adults seeking Confirmation. These will take place in the spring. You are welcome, however, to sit in on some of our RCIA sessions if you think they would be helpful to your spiritual development.

### **I've been away from the Church for a while and want to come back. Is the RCIA for me?**

No, the RCIA is intended for those seeking *initiation* into the Church, not re-commitment. We encourage you to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation – available at our parish on Saturday mornings or by appointment with a priest – and we look forward to seeing you at Mass! We also invite you to consider attending some of our Adult Faith Formation events.

### **What are the RCIA meetings like?**

The RCIA is more than a "Catholicism 101" course. It is also a time of prayer, reflection, and discussion, aimed not simply at the attainment of knowledge but at spiritual growth and conversion. The theme of each session is rooted in scripture and explored through a variety of lenses, from catechism and liturgy to music and visual art to cultural traditions and personal experiences. The meetings are led by a rotation of experienced teachers, including the clergy, the RCIA coordinator, and other lay ministers.

**What is the attendance policy?**

Preparing for the sacraments requires a substantial time commitment. In addition to the basic Catholic requirement of attending mass every weekend, we expect you to attend each of our weekly RCIA meetings as well. We understand that conflicts will arise from time to time, but we ask that you participate as faithfully as possible.

**I'm interested in learning more but not sure I want to go through with the whole process. Do I have to commit right now?**

No. You are welcome to start coming and see where the journey takes you. There will be several opportunities along the way for you to pause and discern whether you wish to continue.

**Does the church charge a fee for the RCIA?**

No.

**What should I bring?**

Bring an honest heart and a discerning mind. Bring a sense of wonder and curiosity. Bring your lingering questions, your half-formed prayers, your reservations and concerns. On a more practical level, bring a Bible if you have one and perhaps a journal or notebook.

**Do I need a sponsor?**

Not immediately. If you decide to complete the RCIA process and receive the sacraments, you will need a sponsor to accompany you. Your sponsor must be an adult Catholic who attends mass regularly at this parish. You may already have someone in mind to serve as your sponsor; if not, we will match you with a parishioner who has volunteered to serve in this role.

**Can my spouse/fiancé be my sponsor?**

While there is no rule against it, we generally encourage you to find a sponsor *other* than your spouse or fiancé(e), in order to build additional bonds of friendship, spiritual counsel, and Christian communion.