



Church of the Visitation

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What is OCIA?

The Order of Christian Initiation of Adults, or OCIA, is the normative way to receive formation and prepare to enter the Catholic Church. This process was previously known as RCIA, the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, until the U.S. bishops renamed it to reflect a more accurate translation of the original Latin. OCIA prepares men and women to make a conscious choice whether or not they want receive the Sacraments of Initiation offered by the Catholic Church (Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation).

Who is OCIA for?

The OCIA program involves not just the newcomer or “inquirer” but all the members of the community who by prayer and personal example help the inquirer find his or her place in the Church.

- OCIA is open to all adults, even those who are already Catholic that may be seeking a refresher about their faith or just want to learn more as they continue their journey of faith.
- OCIA is for those persons who have never been baptized and seek to join the community of believers. These men and women are called “Catechumens.”
- OCIA is for those who have been baptized in another Christian faith, but are seeking to join the Catholic Church. These men and women are called “Candidates.”
- OCIA is for those who have been baptized in the Catholic faith but who have never been fully initiated, through the Sacraments of Eucharist and Confirmation. These are also called “Candidates.”
- Others who participate in OCIA are: Fully Initiated Catholic adults who serve as sponsors for the catechumens and candidates. These people have a very important role in helping to nurture and introduce the catechumens and candidates to the Church community by providing support, example and prayer.

What is the time commitment for OCIA?

- OCIA sessions begin in the Fall. The OCIA group meets every Sunday morning from 10:15 AM to 11:30 AM at the Rectory, from September through the Easter Vigil and Pentecost. For 2025, the first session is on Sunday, September 7th. The sessions culminate with the Rites being received at the Easter Vigil on Saturday, April 4th, 2026. This is the primary time commitment, and there may be other commitments depending on what part of the process you’re going through.
- During this time, we will experience the four stages of the process as outlined in this article. Once the Catechumenate stage begins, catechumens and candidates meet for Dismissal sessions each Sunday morning after the 9:00 AM Mass. Dismissal sessions are meetings in which catechumens and candidates study the scripture readings for each Sunday and begin to explore how the scriptures are relevant to their lives of faith.
- We recognize that many people have work and family schedules that won’t allow them to be at every meeting. That said, it’s best if you can be at most meetings because each lesson builds on earlier lessons. If you have to miss a day, we’ll provide ways for you to catch up on what you miss.

The Four Stages of OCIA

1. **Evangelization and Prechatechumenate:** The inquirer learns of Christ and is drawn to the Catholic Church; he or she takes part in a period of searching and takes the first step toward becoming Catholic by conversing with a priest or parish director of Christian initiation to become a catechumen.
2. **Catechumenate:** Usually over the course of a year or less, a catechumen or candidate takes this time to learn more about the Catholic faith and what it means for his or her life. The Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens and the Rite of Election take place during this stage.
3. **Purification and Enlightenment:** During Lent, a catechumen anticipates his or her initiation into the Catholic Church through prayer and learning. Initiation commonly takes place on the Easter Vigil, which is the culmination of the process where catechumens and candidates receive the sacraments of initiation (baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist.)
4. **Mystagogy:** After being received into the Church, newly initiated Catholics continue to be formed in their faith during what the Church calls the “Period of Mystagogy.” This lasts until Pentecost, the feast 50 days after Easter in which the Church celebrates the birth of the Church, when the Holy Spirit descended on the disciples.

If you or someone you know would like more information or want to register, please call the Rectory Office at 415-494-5517 x 3 or email us at info@visitacionchurch.org.