

Throughout the year, many individuals come forward seeking to learn more about the Catholic faith. They may have a friend who is Catholic; may be dating, engaged to, or married to a Catholic; or they may just be seeking information on their own. They may have even been baptized as a Catholic but never completed their initiation. They may be a member of another faith tradition and seeking a deeper relationship with our Lord.

If you are such a seeker, we welcome you! The St. John Nepomuk community invites you to check out the adult initiation process here at our parish with the hope that you will find an opportunity to grow even closer to God in your personal life.

The adult initiation process is one of prayer, reflection, and learning that allows for the continual discernment of God's will in our lives.

No matter where you are on your faith journey, there is a place for you at St. John Nepomuk.

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Adult Initiation or the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)

At this time I have no intention of joining the Church, but I do want to learn more about Catholicism. Is there a place for me in the adult initiation process?

Yes. We all learn from one another and from our journey to know God better. Please join us for the next Catholic Inquiry Session and we can discuss what path may be best for your continued journey.

I know that I want to join the Catholic Church. Where do I begin?

This depends on you and where you are on your faith journey. If you are fairly new to Catholicism or have limited experience with the Christian faith, you may find it helpful to continue to explore Catholicism for a time before moving into the Catechumenate gathering. Each person's journey is unique and the adult initiation team will assist you in utilizing the process at St. John so that your journey is fruitful and fulfilling.

Once I have decided to join the Catholic Church, why might it take a year or longer? That seems like a long time.

When someone who is not baptized comes forward with an interest in joining the Catholic Church, that interest is then to be joined with knowledge about the Church's traditions and teachings, as well as a sufficient experience of the Catholic faith community. Joining the Catholic Church is not about passing a test on Catholicism; rather, it is about learning and living the Gospel of Jesus in the context of the parish and wider Catholic community. This takes time and it is suggested that one preparing for baptism wishing to join the Church experience at least one full liturgical year with the Catholic faith community.

Adult baptisms are celebrated each year at the Easter Vigil (the Saturday night before Easter Sunday), which occurs each year in the spring. If one comes to the parish in December with a desire to be baptized and to join the Church, the following Easter would only be approximately 4 months away. This is not sufficient time for someone to experience the fullness of the Catholic faith through the church and community. This "December seeker" would be welcomed into the adult initiation process, would journey with a fellow group of seekers, and would most likely be baptized and initiated into the Catholic Church approximately 16 months later. If one comes to the parish in the spring having made a decision to join the church, depending on the level of preparation needed, that person may be deemed ready to be initiated into the church at the following Easter, which would be approximately 12 months

later. Each person's journey is unique and the duration in formation depends on the grace of God.

The goal in joining the Catholic Church is not purely to be baptized, although the Sacrament of Baptism is a priceless gift from our God. The goal is to grow in your love and awareness of God, to begin or build on your relationship with Jesus Christ, and to learn how the Catholic faith community lives out this call. Baptism is part of the journey but not a finish line to sprint towards. Joining the Church is a process of shaping our hearts, minds, and spirits so they look more like God's. The rich exploration of faith is not a race, but a journey to be savored, reflected upon, and celebrated.

I am not baptized and am getting married to a Catholic. I wanted to join the Church before our wedding. Is that possible?

Remember, the goal is not purely baptism or even joining the Catholic Church. The goal is learning and living within the context of the Catholic faith community, which allows us to fully live out the Gospel of Jesus Christ as celebrated in the Catholic Church. If your wedding is not yet scheduled, you are invited to talk over this timetable with a member of the adult initiation team or a deacon or priest. If your wedding is already scheduled within the next 12 months, it may be helpful to put the time and energy needed into preparing for and beginning your marriage. This too is a very important and wonderful part of your faith journey! Having said this, you may simultaneously be preparing to join the Church and be preparing for your marriage. Each situation is unique and deserves consideration. Racing to join the Church before your wedding does not respect you or the unique faith journey that God is creating just for you.

I was baptized, but not as a Catholic. I wish to join the Catholic Church. Am I still looking at 12+ months of preparation?

That depends on a variety of things. If you come to the Catholic faith community with a full experience of living the Christian life within the context of your previous faith community, you may be invited to study and understand the differences between Protestantism and Catholicism. This may be sufficient preparation which builds upon your previous adult faith formation. On the other hand, if you come to join the Catholic Church with limited faith experience or knowledge, you will be better served with a fuller and more extensive experience within the adult initiation process. The journey IS the way to faith! Your individual journey is the highest priority and just like any other relationship, our relationship with our God takes energy, intention, and time. Unlike adult baptisms, welcoming baptized adults into the Catholic Church *can* occur outside of the Easter season. However, at St. John Nepomuk the non-baptized as well as the baptized generally proceed through the RCIA process together.

I was baptized as a Catholic and received my first Eucharist, but I was never confirmed. Do I jump into the Adult Initiation process, too?

It depends. Those who are solely preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation may also find the adult initiation sessions to be an excellent way to prepare for the Sacrament of Confirmation. Adult Confirmations can also occur throughout the year. The Parish Pastoral Associate can give you additional information.

I am divorced. Is this an issue as far as the adult initiation process is concerned?

Each situation is unique, but these are important issues to understand and sort out. You are encouraged to talk with the Parish Pastoral Associate or a deacon or priest about your unique situation when you first inquire into the process. There is a process of annulment that must be completed, but because of the many variables in each situation, each case must be handled separately.

Why do I need a sponsor?

Jesus taught his disciples the importance of community. It is meaningful that we walk this faith journey with companions. If you decide to join the Catholic Church or if you are a Catholic who wishes to complete your initiation, you will need a sponsor from the Catholic faith community. Basically, a sponsor is a fully initiated Catholic who will serve as a companion, listener, and mentor. The sponsor will also help you to learn more about the parish and ways to live out the Catholic faith. Sponsors must be at least 18 years old, and practicing Catholics who are in full communion with the Church. Ideally your sponsor will attend Inquiry and RCIA sessions with you. If you do not know anyone who can serve as your sponsor, we have many parishioners who are willing to walk your journey with you.

Is there any cost associated with Initiation into the Catholic Church? What supplies do I need?

There is no cost, and we will supply all of the reading materials. If you would like to take notes, you might consider bringing a notepad or some paper.

So where do I start?

Please call the parish office to get details about where and when our next Inquiry session will be offered, and to ask any other questions you might have.

Inquirers are encouraged to attend as many Inquiry sessions as possible, as we vary most of the lessons to make it more interesting and also to cover more information.