

## **Frequently Asked Questions About the 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 still 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 RCIA team will assist you in utilising the process at St. Monica's 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 baptised 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 of 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 Autumn. If one comes to the parish in December with a desire to be baptised and to join the Church, the following Easter would only be approximately 4 months away. This is generally not sufficient time for someone to experience the fullness of the Catholic faith 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 baptised and initiated into the Catholic Church approximately 16 months later.

If one comes to the parish in the autumn 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 baptised, 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 savoured, reflected upon, and celebrated.

**I am not baptised 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 Fr Tony. 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 also 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 nor the unique faith journey that God is creating just for you.

**I was baptised, 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 baptised adults into the Catholic Church can occur outside of the Easter season.

**I was baptised as a Catholic but never received my first Eucharist nor been confirmed. Where do I fit in?**

You might be invited into the weekly adult initiation sessions and to prepare to complete your initiation into the Catholic faith community. Unlike adult baptisms, welcoming baptised Catholics into full initiation can occur outside of the Easter

season. Permission from the Bishop to celebrate your eventual Confirmation would need to be granted.

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

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.

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

Each situation is unique but these are important issue to understand and sort out. You are encouraged to talk with Fr Tony about your unique situation when you first inquire into the process.

**I understand that 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. If you already have someone in mind that is not from St. Monica's, a co-sponsor may be assigned from the parish if you wish. Baptismal candidates will also have an opportunity to choose a Godparent(s) as baptism approaches.

**Is there any cost associated with Initiation?**

None whatsoever.

**So where do I start?**

Once you have read through all of the information provided here, you may want to come along to an upcoming Catholic Inquiry Session. You may also contact the parish office 9370 5035

May God bless you on your continued journey of faith. Know that you are a welcomed seeker at St. Monica's Church.