

Christian Initiation

The Christian initiation of adults goes back to the earliest days of the Church. At the beginning of Christianity, most people who joined the Church were adults. Only later in history were babies baptized and allowed to join the Church. In 1971, the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults was restored in the Church.

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults has four stages. Each of these four stages helps the person who wants to join the Catholic Church feel and act more like a part of the Family of God.

- 1. First inquiry or Precatechumenate.** The first stage is a time of evangelization. The new members learn about God, Jesus, and the Church. They open their hearts to the Holy Spirit and sincerely desire to adhere to the truth and a life of faith.
- 2. Catechumenate.** This is the time when each new member makes known his or her intention to be baptized and begins a formal period of learning the basics of the Catholic Faith. During this time, catechumens grow in their ability to pray and to take part in liturgical celebrations.
- 3. Election.** During this stage, the Church chooses, or elects, the catechumens it perceives to be ready to receive the sacraments of initiation—Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. This celebration usually takes place over a period of time, and the new members receive the sacraments at the Easter Vigil.
- 4. Mystagogia.** This last stage is a time of receiving the sacraments and developing deeper relationships with the faithful. The main place for this postbaptismal catechesis is the Sunday Masses of the Easter season. The readings of the Lectionary, Cycle A, are especially appropriate to the newly baptized.