

Once a person has been baptized he or she becomes a “neophyte,” which means “beginner” or “novice”. The fourth and final period, called *Mystagogia*, lasts seven weeks, ending at Pentecost in late May or early June. This is a time to reflect on the sacraments and their importance in the Christian life.



Individuals who were baptized in another Christian community do not necessarily have to go through OCIA in order to become Catholic, but because the process is so rewarding most do.

If you were baptized in another church you may be received into the Catholic Church at any time, although some instruction should be expected. The amount of instruction will depend on how active you have been and your knowledge of the Catholic faith. Talk to the pastor or director of OCIA for more information.



Our Lady of Guadalupe  
Patroness of the Diocese of Sacramento

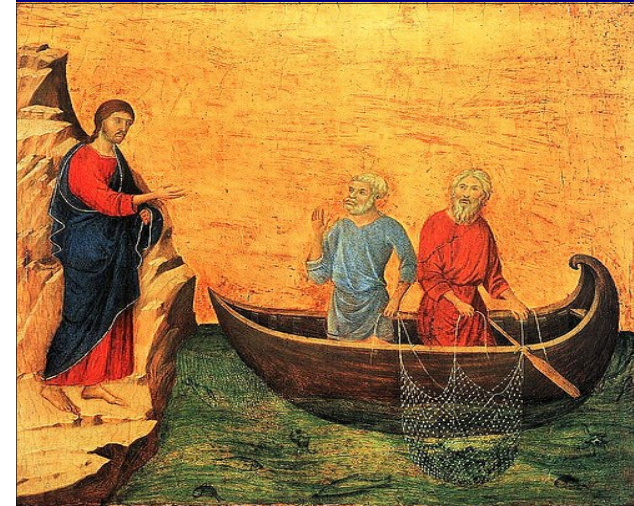
For more information about OCIA or how to become Catholic, contact the Pastor or Director of Religious Education at a parish near you, or call us for assistance at the number below.

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## HOW DO I BECOME CATHOLIC?

Understanding the OCIA Process



*“Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness,  
but will have the light of life.”  
- John 8:12*

# Welcome to the Catholic Church!



*St. Peter's Basilica, Rome*

**The Catholic Church** was founded by Jesus Christ when he said to Peter: "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church" (Matthew 16:18). Normally, most people become Catholic through what's called the "Baptismal Catechumenate" or The Order of Christian Initiation of Adults, "OCIA" for short.

**The Catechumenate** dates back to the dawn of Christianity at the height of the Roman Empire. The catechumenate flourished in the 4th and 5th centuries but gradually disappeared after Europe became Christian.

The catechumenate was revived in the 1960s in order to meet the needs of the rapidly growing populations in Africa and Asia and elsewhere.

**OCIA is not a program, but a gradual process** in which one who, after coming to know Christ freely chooses to follow him by entering the life of faith in the Catholic Church.



*The calling of St. Peter*

**OCIA consists of four periods:** the period of Inquiry, or pre-catechumenate; the *Catechumenate*, Purification & Enlightenment, and *Mystagogy*. The first period, the period of **Inquiry** can begin anytime, although in most parishes it usually starts in September.

**Inquiry** focuses on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, which are found in the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John). It's also a time to learn about the Bible and God's plan of salvation. While the period of inquiry can last any length of time, it normally lasts a couple of months. There is *absolutely no commitment expected* at this time. It's simply a time to listen and ask questions. And to pray.

After this introductory period the first major step takes place, called the **Rite for Entrance into the Catechumenate**. This marks the beginning of the catechumenate proper. At this point the Church embraces catechumens as her own with a mother's love and concern. They are now part of the household of Christ. During this period you will learn more about the Church, her teachings, religious practices and what it means to be Catholic.

The catechumenate, like the period of inquiry can last any length of time, usually about a year.



The **Rite of Election** is the next step in the process and marks the beginning of the third period called **Purification & Enlightenment**. This period coincides with the season of **Lent** in early spring. This is a special time for you to deepen your relationship with Christ through prayer and reflection as you prepare for the sacraments of initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Communion at the Easter Vigil.