

**Office for Evangelization and Faith Formation**  
**How to Become A Catholic in the Diocese of Greensburg**

**Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)**

**The Period of Inquiry**

This period for the catechumen or candidate is a time for the individual to become acquainted with the Roman Catholic Church, hear the good news of salvation proclaimed in sacred Scripture and look at one's life within the context of salvation history.

There is no time limit to this period.

**The Rite of Acceptance and/or Welcome**

The Rite of Acceptance and/or Welcome is a liturgical rite that marks the beginning of the catechumenate proper, as the candidates express, and the church accepts, their intention to respond to God's call to follow the way of Christ (RCIA, Part I).

This rite may be celebrated at any time of the liturgical year, more than once.

**The Period of the Catechumenate**

This period embodies the first stages of commitment leading to full membership. It is the lengthiest period of the initiation process.

The four ways in which the catechumenate period brings to maturity the initial faith that is manifested in the Rite of Acceptance and/or Welcome are:

1. Catechesis
2. Liturgical rites
3. Community life
4. Apostolic works (RCIA No. 75)

With the help of a sponsor, the catechumen or candidate should be introduced to other members of the parish community and participate in parish activities, to the extent in which they are able.

**The Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion**

The Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion is the liturgical rite, celebrated at Blessed Sacrament Cathedral in Greensburg on the first and second Sundays of Lent, by which the church, the Diocese of Greensburg and the bishop of Greensburg formally ratify the catechumens' readiness for the sacraments of initiation and recognize the candidates preparing for confirmation and Eucharist or reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church. The catechumens, now the elect, and the candidates express their willingness to receive these sacraments (RCIA, Part 1).

**The Period of Purification and Enlightenment**

The Period of Purification and Enlightenment occurs during Lent and has the character of a time of retreat for the elect and candidates. The centerpiece of this period of prayerful preparation is the celebration of the scrutinies.

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The scrutinies include prayers for deliverance from sin, evil and evil influences in order to strengthen the faithful to the word of God. During the prayers, the elect kneel in humility as the community prays for them (RCIA No. 50). Although the candidates will not be the subject of the scrutinies, catechesis for both the elect and candidates during this period is related to the celebration of the scrutinies.

The scrutinies are celebrated at Mass on the third, fourth and fifth Sundays of Lent using cycle A readings (RCIA No. 146). The presentations of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer to the elect are also celebrated during this period.

Throughout this period, the elect and the candidates are invited to join with the whole church in a deeper practice of works of charity and fasting.

The elect and candidates are advised to refrain from their usual activities on Holy Saturday, spend time in prayer and reflection and observe a fast, to the extent in which they are able (RCIA No. 185). The preparation rites (RCIA No. 185ff) assist this process of prayer and reflection.

**Celebrating the Sacraments of Initiation**

In the Catholic liturgy, the celebration of the glorious resurrection of the Lord Jesus at the Easter Vigil is the climax of the liturgical year. During this celebration, the church welcomes the elect and the candidates into full sacramental life with the Catholic faithful.

The catechumens receive the sacrament of baptism, and the candidates and the catechumen receive the sacraments of confirmation and the Holy Eucharist (RCIA No. 56). From this time on, the elect, who have been initiated into the Catholic Church, are called neophytes. "Neophyte" means 'newly planted;' the elects are now in full communion with the church (RCIA No. 57). The neophytes will continue their formation in the fourth phase of the RCIA process until the celebration of the solemnity of Pentecost (RCIA No. 58).

**Period of Mystagogy**

The Period of Mystagogy lasts from Easter Sunday until the completion of the Easter season, which is 50 days later on Pentecost Sunday. This completes the initiation process. During the period of Easter joy, they reflect on that which they have just experienced and look to the future as to how they can share in the mission of Christ. During this phase, members of the parish RCIA team familiarize the neophytes to different parish ministries. This process allows the neophytes to choose how they want to become actively involved in parish life.

Visit the Parishes section at [www.dioceseofgreensburg.org](http://www.dioceseofgreensburg.org) to find a Catholic Church in your community.