



Becoming Catholic

Frequently Asked Questions

What do I have to do to become Catholic?

The process of becoming Catholic, formally called the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), happens within the community of faith. It involves prayer and worship, service, scripture, community, and of course learning about Catholic beliefs. It culminates with receiving the Sacraments of Initiation.

We meet together in a small group on Sunday Mornings, after the 9 AM mass, but it's not a 'class.' It's a time to get your questions answered, to discover Christ on a more personal level, to grow in your relationship with God, and to be introduced to the Catholic way of life.

What are the Sacraments of Initiation?

Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. If someone comes to us who was never baptized, all three sacraments are received together at the Easter Vigil after an appropriate time of preparation, most likely about 1 year.

I have children who aren't baptized. What about them?

Children and youth age 7 and above go through a variation of the Becoming Catholic process designed for them and their families called Summit. Summit is a two year process that consists of small groups, prayer and worship, service, Word, community, and learning about our faith. Since children don't develop in a vacuum, parents actively participate with their children. Read more about our Summit program [HERE](#).

If your children are younger, age 6 and below, they would be baptized with other children and infants. You can learn more about the process. [HERE](#). Please note, you cannot request baptism for your children unless one parent is already Catholic. So, if neither you nor your spouse is Catholic, your children's baptism would need to wait until one of you have become Catholic.

I was baptized in a Protestant church. Would I be baptized again?

Not if you were baptized with water in the Trinitarian formula ("in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit"). You'd be received into full communion with the Catholic Church in the Rite of Reception, at which time you'll make a simple profession of faith and receive the sacraments of Eucharist and Confirmation.

Why is the process different for those who are baptized?

The Church reminds us to always recognize the grace of the sacrament of Baptism, and to respect how God has already been actively involved in a person's life. So we acknowledge the faith with which you come to us and the grace of God already at work in you.

Is there a fee?

There is no fee; we provide you with the necessary materials, including a Bible. All that is required is a sincere and searching heart, and that you commit to attend each session, spend some time during the week reflecting on Scripture, and participate in Mass each Sunday.

How long does it take to become Catholic?

Becoming Catholic isn't a course of study from which you graduate, but it's a gradual process of being formed in faith.

The time of preparation is crafted to meet the needs of the individual, and each person's faith journey is unique. If someone is a baptized Christian and has been practicing their faith, the process is shorter and may only take a month or two. If someone is baptized but has never practiced the Christian faith, they may join the un-baptized in a longer period of preparation, sometimes nearly one year.

We try to meet you where you are, listen to you, and discern with you what is right for you. We want to offer you the opportunity to fully discern God's call at this important time in your life.

I'm not ready to make a commitment to becoming Catholic yet - I have too many questions. Is there a place for me?

Most definitely. Although some may have already made a decision to become Catholic, many others come searching. We will be with you wherever you are on this journey of faith. There will be time for questions asked and answered, for grappling with doubts, and a chance to reflect on where God is calling you on this journey.

There are no strings attached, and the only requirement is a searching and sincere heart. We will ask if you are ready before you move to each successive phase of the Becoming Catholic process. We really want you to discern if this is right for you.

What are the stages of the Becoming Catholic process?

Our Becoming Catholic process is a gradually deepening process of exploring God's call to a life of faith, coming to know the person of Jesus, and becoming one with his community of believers, the Church. This process unfolds in stages.

Phase One - An initial phase of where a person considering becoming a Catholic Christian can ask questions and we can review the basic story of Jesus' life and how that matters to each of us. This phase can be viewed as a getting to know Jesus phase.

Phase Two - A teaching phase, that begins after a person decides he or she is interested in knowing more about Catholicism and the Church.

Phase Three - A preparation phase, which helps the person who has decided they would like to enter the Catholic Church and receive sacraments prepares to receive those sacraments. This phase has an emphasis on prayer and reflection.

Phase Four - Finally, there is a reflection phase, after the person has received sacraments in which they further reflect on the mysteries of faith. This phase helps people integrate what they learned beforehand with their lived experience.

I've been through a divorce. Will this affect my becoming Catholic?

If you've been divorced and are not remarried, this will not stand in your way.

If you are remarried or engaged, there's a process by which the Catholic Church may grant an annulment of your previous marriage, so that your current marriage can be blessed (validated) by the Church. We'll talk about this early on and do all we can to help you with this, but you may not become Catholic until it is resolved.

What if I get started and decide this isn't for me?

There is never an obligation for you to become Catholic. Anyone seeking to explore the Catholic faith is welcome to join us. All are encouraged to ask questions, to think for themselves, and to take all the time they need to make their decisions.

Faith in God and the decision to become a member of the Catholic Church are significant and personal choices that must be made in the atmosphere of complete freedom. We will do our best to help you understand what it means to be a Catholic Christian and to support you on your faith journey. But we sincerely believe that the decision is yours to make without pressure from us.

How do I know I'm ready to begin?

Well, that's really up to you! We are ready to meet you where you are whenever you come to our door. But here are common reasons we have heard from past participants about why they began:

- I had a hard time answering my child's questions about religion and/or sacraments, and I wanted to know what to say.
- I felt like I never learned enough about Jesus/God/Prayer/etc and felt like I was missing something important.
- I was already Christian, but I wanted to know what is different about being Catholic.
- My family didn't understand why we decided to send the kids to Catholic School, and I wanted to be able to address their concerns.
- I wanted to receive the Sacraments with my child.
- I just didn't have a good answer when my child asked why I didn't go to Communion (or was never Confirmed).
- I'd been thinking about becoming Catholic for a while, and it finally just seemed like it was time.
- I walked into a Catholic church with a friend, and I can't describe why, but I immediately felt at home.
- I was kind of lost, and I knew that life could offer more.
- I went to church as a kid, but after my parents split up, we didn't go that often. But somehow I missed it, and I want to get back to that.

I'm ready to begin. What do I do?

Contact Jen Mayer at adults@spxbowie.org or 301-262-2142 ext12 to set up an informal interview. In this interview, she'll talk to you about your religious background, address your concerns, and answer your questions about the process of becoming Catholic. You can start this next part of your faith journey now.