

Becoming a Catholic

Have you ever wondered about...

- what Catholics believe?
- the meaning of your life?
- why and how to pray and what to say?

Do you ever long for...

- some answers to your own personal questions about the purpose of life?
- a people, a community, who can support you on your life's journey?

Would you like to...

- answer your children's questions about God, Reconciliation, Baptism, good and evil, the saints etc?

If so, then there is a group near you where you can seek answers to your questions in a friendly and safe environment.

For more information contact your local parish priest or the RCIA team in your parish or contact the Diocesan office on 4253 0900.

Your Local Catholic Church

In the Catholic Diocese of Wollongong there are 31 parishes. Those who are interested in becoming Catholics should, in the first place, make contact with their priest or RCIA coordinator in their local Catholic Church community. You will find contact details under Catholic Church (Parishes and Presbyteries) in the telephone book.

RCIA

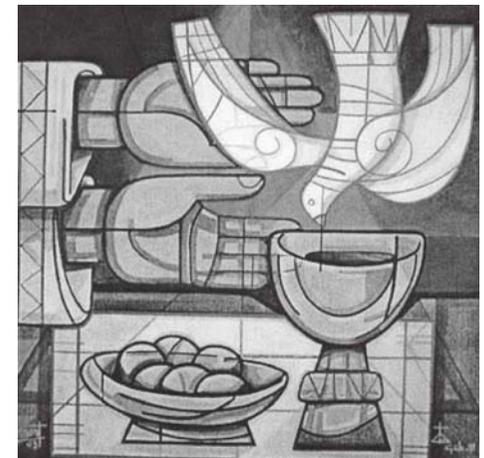
Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults



Diocese of Wollongong
Catholic Church Offices
86-88 Market Street
Wollongong NSW 2500
Tel (02) 4253 0900

dow.org.au

How to become a Catholic



Interested in becoming a Catholic?

People from a variety of backgrounds and for many different reasons may express an interest in knowing more about the Catholic faith. You may be engaged to, or already married to, a Catholic; you may be a member of another Christian denomination or a religion that is not Christian, or have no religious affiliation. You may be looking for a spiritual home. The Catholic community welcomes you, whatever your background.



What can the Catholic Church offer me?

The Church Jesus Christ founded continues to exist, with all its essential elements, in the Catholic Church. Many of those elements are also present in other Christian Churches with whom Catholics are in ecumenical dialogue but not yet in full communion. Christ's Church is built on the foundation of the twelve Apostles. Christ commissioned it "to make disciples of all nations." (Mt 28:20) From the Church community the Apostles founded, the Catholic Church now exists in every country on earth, offering forgiveness and the promise and pledge of eternal life in the name of Jesus, through preaching the Word and celebrating the Sacraments of salvation.

How do I become a Catholic?

First of all, talk to a Priest or Religious or lay parish leader about your desire, your background, and what has brought you to this point.

Then you may join a group of people who are enquiring into the Catholic faith. In this case you would journey with them over several months as you learn about the teachings, practices and values of Catholics. You will also begin to attend Mass on Sundays.

Mostly, adults who wish to become Catholics, would do so at Easter, during the night Mass on the Saturday evening before Easter, the Easter Vigil – the greatest Feast in the Catholic calendar! There you would be baptised (unless you have already been validly baptised), receive the sacrament of Confirmation and be admitted to Holy Communion for the first time. This whole process is called the RCIA – the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

What does this journey involve?

There are four stages to the RCIA, three of which conclude with a ritual community ceremony – a Rite. At each Rite the candidates affirm their intention to proceed to the next stage, while the community commits to supporting them on their journey. The four stages are:

1. Candidates, having made initial enquiries, take part in the Rite of Welcome.
2. A period of learning and formation in the teachings of the Catholic Church and how Catholics live everyday life, concludes with the Rite of Election.
3. The Lenten season, a more focussed preparation time for the Sacraments, culminates in the Rite of Initiation.
4. Having received the Sacraments at the Easter Vigil the new Catholics reflect on the direction of their lives.

Who will accompany you on the Journey?

The whole parish has a responsibility for the gathering and nurturing of new members. The parish community welcomes you and delegates some from among its members to accompany you on your journey to full communion with Christ's Church.

Bishop Peter Ingham, as part of his overall pastoral care of the Diocese, personally and actively promotes the catechumenate and officially welcomes the new members himself by presiding at the Rite of Election on the first Sunday of Lent.

The Priest in the Parish plays a special role in ministering to the pastoral and spiritual care of those on the journey and those accompanying them. He presides at the Easter Vigil and celebrates the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.



Sponsors are delegated by the parish family to take an active and supportive role as companions, witnesses and guides for those seeking to join the Catholic Church.

A team of catechists and support people (an RCIA team) is responsible for guiding the formation process of the members of the group. This formation is based on reflection on the Word of God and a growing understanding of the Catholic faith and way of life.