



Who is RCIA intended for:

- Non-Catholics who want to find out more about the Catholic faith
- Those who want to join the Catholic Church through Baptism or a Profession of Faith
- Those who were baptized Catholic as children but never received religious education, Confirmation or First Communion

I would like to pursue RCIA in order for my child to attend Catholic School within Halton:

Please see the attached note at the end which provides detailed information about RCIA as it relates to a desire for registration within the Halton Catholic School Board.

Why is RCIA described as a process and not a program?

Christians are made, not born. There is nothing automatic or instant in the Rite of Christian Initiation. The development of faith takes times and cannot be rushed along. The candidates must be provided sufficient time and opportunity to explore and for the faith to develop. Generally, this takes close to a year of formation. However, depending on the background and personal characteristics of each individual this can take longer.

As a process RCIA is not simply a check list of readings and tasks to complete. It is truly a personal journey of faith for each one enrolled in RCIA.

What does the process look like?

There are 5 stages of the RCIA Process. Depending on each individual's background and experience some or all of those enrolled will participate in all 5 stages. These stages can generally be described in the following ways

- **Period of Inquiry:**
At this time participants are encouraged to ask questions and explore the basic tenets of the Catholic faith and to reflect upon these in light of their own life experiences.
- **Period of the Catechumenate:**
It is during this time that most of study of Scripture, doctrine, traditions and meeting with the community takes place.
- **Period of Purification and Enlightenment:**
For those preparing for baptism, this stage takes place during the Lenten season where they reflect upon their own faith experiences in a more intense, prayerful way. Other times during the year, baptized candidates reflect more deeply upon the meaning of their baptism and celebrate the Sacrament of Penance.

- **Sacraments of Initiation:**
All participants celebrate their initiation into the Church on the holiest of nights-the Easter Vigil - where they are baptized (if applicable), confirmed and receive Eucharist.
- **Period of Mystagogy:**
This is a time for candidates to reflect upon their experiences of being new Catholic Christians and find their place in the ordinary life of the Church.

Some Common Questions About RCIA:

- **Must I make a commitment to Catholicism to participate in RCIA?**
No! We realize that many people are searching and need to know more about the Church before they make such a commitment. We also realize that the response to our Lord's invitation to become Catholic happens at different times in people's lives and some people desire a different timeline for discernment. We will support those wishes as it is not our intent to pressure anyone towards making the commitment. At the start of the season of Lent we will ask for a fuller commitment as we enter into the Period of Purification and Enlightenment.
- **Is there a fee to participate in RCIA?** No. The process includes some materials for study which are provided by the parish once enrolled.
- **What if I cannot attend the planned evening and/or weekend RCIA sessions due to my availability of other commitments?** RCIA is a commitment unto itself. It is necessary to be able to set aside the required time as much as possible. We realize that things come up unexpectedly and some flexibility can be granted, however an overall commitment is expected. If you are interested in RCIA and concerned about the scheduling contact the RCIA Leader to discuss this before making a decision regarding involvement.
- **I was baptized in another Christian faith (i.e., Anglican, Methodist, United). Must I be re-baptized in order to join the Catholic Church?**
No! There is only one Baptism. Candidates seeking full Communion within the Catholic Church will not be baptized again. They will simply make a *Profession of Faith* and receive the Sacraments of Eucharist and Confirmation. The process and rites for those already baptized will differ in some ways from those who are being baptized however the journey is still a communal one with prayer and study in addition to reflection.
- **My child has not been baptized and is over the age of 7. Does he/she participate in RCIA?** No. Children who are over the age of 7 participate in a process specifically for their age group. This is called RCIC (Rite of Christian Initiation of Children) and is unique in its structure. Contact the RCIA Leader for more information on RCIC.

If you are inquiring about RCIA in order for your child to attend Catholic school in Halton, please understand the expectations of the Catholic Church as it relates to participation in RCIA and the juxtaposition with the school board and its requirements for admission.

Background:

The Catholic Schools in Ontario exist because, at the time of the Confederation, Catholics were granted the right to their own schools. This right was written into the Canadian Constitution and it stems from the fact that the French speaking population was majority Catholic and having their own French schools was one way to protect their minority language rights. How has this right been translated into law? A Catholic parent has the right to send their child to a Catholic School. This is part of the civil code and has nothing to do with the Catholic Church per se. (Note this applies only to elementary schools. High schools have open access.)

What can we do?

The Halton Catholic School Board is generally strict about non-Catholic admissions and rarely permits them. In approaching the local Catholic Parish, you can inquire about becoming Catholic yourselves. The parish offers a program of adult faith formation in order to prepare for Catholic baptism or if someone is already a baptized Christian, to receive Confirmation and Holy Communion. This is called the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). This process is about becoming a full member of the Catholic Church and wanting to live one's Christian discipleship as part of the Catholic Church. Going through this process is a commitment to become a Roman Catholic for the rest of your life.

Many people are attracted to the Catholic schools because of the faith-based environment and the milieu that it creates. However, from the Church's perspective, wanting your child in a Catholic School cannot be the only motivation for seeking to be initiated into the Catholic Church through RCIA. It must be a decision based on one's response to a deeply held religious conviction that the Catholic faith is the only true faith and the best place for you to serve God as a disciple of the Lord Jesus. A Catholic is obliged to believe everything that the Church teaches, and they should not identify as any other denomination that they may have been a part of in the past. Because being a Catholic entails obligation that will shape many aspects of your life going forward, becoming Catholic should be a decision that you would make even if the Catholic School was not an option.

If you are serious about this, or want more information on the process of becoming Catholic (RCIA), then please reach out to our Pastoral Minister, Arden Ouellette. She coordinates RCIA, and is also very knowledgeable in the Catholic Schools, and what is required. You can send her an email at aouellette@hamiltondiocese.com.