

SACRAMENTS

Baptism

What is Baptism?

"Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit, and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as children of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission: Baptism is a sacrament of regeneration through water in the word." (Catechism 1213)
Through baptism, we become part of the royal, priestly people of God, called to holy lives of prayer and service.

Baptism of Young Children (0-6 years)

At St. Therese, the sacrament of Baptism is celebrated communally, in the context of the Sunday Eucharist. We celebrate baptisms of young children quarterly at all of our weekend Masses. First time parents/guardians are asked to participate in a Baptism Preparation Class to update their understanding of baptism, the important responsibilities of Christian parenting, and learn more about the many ways our parish supports families. To reserve a date for your child's baptism, please contact Mary Lou Colasurdo, Pastoral Associate.
marylou@saintthereseeparish.org

Parents/Guardians are required to be a registered parishioner here or have a personal connection with a registered parishioner (i.e. grandparents are members of the parish). If a family is a member of another parish, a letter must be received from their own parish granting permission for the baptism indicating that they are registered and have participated in that parish's baptism preparation class.

Who can be a godparent?

Church law requires that there is at least one godparent for the child baptized. Godparents need to be active, practicing and confirmed Catholics at least 16 years in age. Godparents need to submit written proof of registration from their parish.

Can a non-Catholic be a godparent?

No, only a Catholic can be a godparent because they are asked to promise to help support raising the child in the Catholic faith. A non-

Catholic Christian can witness the baptism as long as there is one Catholic godparent. A non-baptized person cannot be a godparent or witness.

What if the godparents can't come to the actual celebration?

You can have a proxy stand in for the godparent(s). Please let the staff know so they can record the name of the proxy on the certificate.

Can I schedule a private baptism?

No, unless there is an exceptional circumstance. Baptism celebrates the initiation of the child into the parish community and it is very important that the community is present at the time of the celebration.

Baptism of Older Children (7-17 years)

St. Therese Parish welcomes children of catechetical age, along with their families, on a journey of preparation for initiation into the Catholic community. The Church prepares older children and adults for all the sacraments of initiation: Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation by participating in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. Those children who have never been baptized will participate in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd and celebrate their sacraments at the Easter Vigil. Those children already baptized in other Christian communities will make a profession of faith into the Catholic Church and will receive the sacraments of Eucharist and Confirmation in the Rite of Reception into Full Communion with the Catholic Church.

First Reconciliation and First Communion?

At about age 7, children can begin to prepare to receive communion, the body and blood of Christ, for the first time. In conjunction with the new Archdiocesan guidelines, preparation for First Reconciliation and First Communion is a two-year process that includes preparation for First Reconciliation (Confession) and culminates in the First Communion celebration on the first Sunday in May.

Reconciliation

The Church Fathers sometimes called this sacrament "the more difficult baptism." St. Ambrose drew a parallel between reconciliation and baptism: "there are water and tears: the water of Baptism and the tears of repentance." The Sacrament of Reconciliation is celebrated on Saturdays, 4:30-5:45 in the Reconciliation Chapel, located across from the west facing door of the church. Communal

celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is celebrated two times a year in preparation for Christmas and Easter.

Confirmation

The Sacrament of Confirmation is, with Baptism and Eucharist, one of the three sacraments of initiation; confirmation completes and “confirms” the grace of baptism. Through the anointing with the sacred chrism the baptized person is “enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit,” and more than ever “obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed” (Catechism 1285) Confirmation is typically celebrated every other year in the spring, with preparation classed integrated in our senior high youth program for 16 and older.

Marriage

The Church looks on marriage as a “covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life” (*Catechism* 1601). In its understanding of marriage, the Church looks back to the union between man and woman ordained by God in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 1-2). Christ worked his first miracle in the context of a wedding feast. In the Sacrament of Matrimony, the married couple become, in their unity and in their love for one another, “an efficacious sign of Christ’s presence” (*Catechism* 1613).

Anointing of the Sick

The Anointing of the Sick—formerly known as ‘last rites’—is no longer considered a sacrament only for those at the point of death. Instead, this healing sacrament is for all those who are facing major surgery, chronic illness, or the weakness that comes with age. Communal celebrations of the sacrament are celebrated regularly.

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is a process of initiation into the Catholic Community of Faith. This is for persons who are seeking baptism in the Catholic Church or full communion with the Catholic tradition through the Profession of Faith, reception of Eucharist and Confirmation. It is a process which enables the study of the Gospels, Catholic teaching, Christian values, and the development and deepening of a life of prayer and action with the support and involvement of the parish community.

What is the RCIA?

The RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults), also called the Catechumenate, is a process of initiation into the Catholic Community of Faith for persons who are experiencing a conversion in their lives and seeking either Christian baptism in the Catholic Church or full Communion with the Catholic tradition of Eucharist and Confirmation.

It is a process that enables the study of the Gospels, Catholic Christian teaching, the acceptance of Christian values and morality, the development and deepening of a life of prayer and action with the support and involvement of the local Christian community. The RCIA is more than a course of instruction. It is a process of conversion, designed to meet the unique and individual needs of the participants.

Who is RCIA for?

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

Why an RCIA Process? Wasn't the old Inquiry Class good enough?

Christians are made, not born. There is nothing automatic or instant in the Rite of Christian Initiation. The development of faith takes time; it cannot be rushed. The candidates must be allowed sufficient time for their faith to ripen. Ordinarily, this means anywhere from one to two years of formation depending, of course, on the background and spiritual maturity of the candidates.

In the past (in fact, hundreds of years ago), a person desiring reception into the Christian Community studied, prayed, fasted and did good works for three years. Initiation takes time. Initiation is more than doctrinal instruction. It is a way of coming to know the traditions, the people, the prayer and the actions of the community.

Five stages of the RCIA Process

- **Inquiry or Pre-Catechumenate**
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.
- **The Catechumenate**
It is during this time that most of study of Scripture, doctrine, traditions and meeting with the community takes place.
- **Purification & 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**
Candidates for baptism celebrate their initiation into the Church on the holiest of nights-the Easter Vigil - where they are baptized, confirmed and receive Eucharist. Candidates for full communion celebrate their Rite of Reception several other times throughout the year.
- **Mystagogia**
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

- **Must I make a commitment to Catholicism to participate in this program?**

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 Catholicism is not for everyone. We ask no firm commitment until the beginning of Lent.
- **I was baptized a Methodist, Baptist, etc. 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.

- **What steps do I need to take to begin the process of Inquiry?**

Please contact Mary Lou Colasurdo, Pastoral Associate
marylou@saintthereseeparish.org

Rites for those who have never been baptized

RITE of ACCEPTANCE

In this rite, those who have never been baptized state their intention to respond to God's call to follow the way of Christ. The Church, in turn, accepts them into the Order of Catechumens (a Greek word meaning 'hearers'). "From this time on, the Church embraces the catechumens as its own, with a mother's love and concern. Joined to the Church, the catechumens are now part of the household of Christ, since the Church nourishes them with the word of God and sustains them by means of liturgical celebrations" (RCIA, 47).

As this rite begins, those who wish to enter the order of catechumens are received at the doors of the Church. An ancient dialogue follows. The priest, representing the entire Church, asks, "What do you ask of God's Church?" They respond: "Faith." "What does faith offer you?" "Eternal life." At the heart of this rite is the signing of the senses of the catechumens with the cross. Their forehead, ears, eyes, lips, heart, shoulders, hands, and feet are all marked with the sign of the Cross.

DISMISSALS

Each Sunday, the catechumens are dismissed following the homily at Mass. With a leader, they go to the Parish Center where they spend time in meditation and prayer on the readings of the day. This immersion in the word of God is a primary part of their preparation and formation.

"My friends, this community now sends you forth to reflect more deeply upon the word of God which you have shared with us today. Be assured of our loving support and prayers for you. We look forward to the day when you will share fully at the Lord's table. Go now in the peace of Christ."

RITE of ELECTION

After long months of formation and preparation, as the season of Lent begins, the catechumens gather in the Cathedral with Archbishop Brunett, Father Okumu, and the catechumens, pastors, and RCIA teams of many other parishes. During this rite, the catechumens formally declare their wish to enter fully into the life of the Church through baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist, and write their names in the Book of the Elect.

On the basis of the testimony of sponsors and catechists, the Archbishop, representing the entire Church, admits the catechumens to the Easter sacraments of initiation: "I now declare you to be members of the Elect, to be initiated into the sacred mysteries at the next Easter Vigil. Now it is your duty, as it is ours, to be faithful to God and to strive courageously to reach the fullness of truth which your election opens up before you."

SCRUTINIES

Celebrated on the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Sundays of Lent, the Scrutinies are intended to deliver the Elect from the power of sin, to protect them against temptation, and to give them strength in Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life. Through prayers and ritual action, the Elect acknowledge their faults.

From one of the Scrutiny prayers: "Father of mercies... look with love on these Elect and fulfill their hopes; they have already experienced temptation and they acknowledge their faults. Lead them from darkness into your unfailing light, cleanse them from sin, let them know the joy of your peace, and guide them safely through life."

The SACRAMENTS of INITIATION

At the Easter Vigil, the Elect receive the sacraments of initiation-- baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist. By baptism, they are received into the royal priesthood of believers; by confirmation, they receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, and share in the outpouring of grace that came upon the apostles at Pentecost. They then receive the Eucharist, sharing for the first time in the body and blood of Christ, the heavenly food that strengthens us to carry out Christ's work in our own time and place. For our Elect, the sacraments of initiation are not the end, but the beginning of new lives of faith and service.

Rites for those baptized in other Christian traditions

RITE of WELCOMING

This rite welcomes those baptized in other Christian traditions who are seeking to complete their Christian initiation through the sacraments of confirmation and Eucharist--in other words, to be received into the full communion of the Catholic Church. The rite acknowledges that the candidates are already members of the Christian community through baptism. Now the Church surrounds them with special care and support as they prepare to be sealed with the gift of the Spirit in confirmation and take their place at the banquet table of Christ's sacrifice.

"Father of mercy, we thank you for these your servants. You have already consecrated them in baptism and now you call them to the fullness of the Church's sacramental life: we praise you Lord, and we bless you."

RITE of RECEPTION into FULL COMMUNION

After careful preparation and prayer, the candidates are received into the full communion of the Catholic Church at the Sunday Mass, surrounded by the parish community. They make a solemn profession of faith. Then the priest, in the name of the entire Church, says to each one, "The Lord receives you into the Catholic Church. His loving kindness has led you here so that in the unity of the Holy Spirit you may have full communion with us in the faith that you have professed in the presence of His family."

At this time they are also confirmed and share in the Eucharist for the first time.

FAITH FORMATION

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd