



Parish of St Mary & St Paul
Celebrating 200 years
1825 to 2025

THE PARISH OF ST MARY AND ST PAUL, DUKINFIELD AND HYDE RCIA PROGRAMME

The RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) programme is the Catholic Church's process for welcoming and preparing adults to become Catholic. It involves study, prayer, and participation in a faith community to learn and grow in understanding of Catholic beliefs and practices. The programme's stages culminate in the Easter sacraments of **Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist**, though individuals' specific paths through the process can vary.

The origins of the Rite date back to ancient times. From Apostolic times it has been part of the Church's tradition to baptise adults after some form of instruction. Over time, three distinct periods of preparation emerged. These were the catechumenate, Lent and the period of mystagogy. These periods remain central to the modern form of RCIA. In addition, a period before catechumenate is recognised as an equally important part of the process. These periods are separated by "Rites", or Liturgical actions, which mark the end of one period and the beginning of the next. The initial period is known as the Period of Inquiry. At this time a person is curious about becoming a Christian (or a Catholic Christian) and wants to know more. The Church offers instruction to help the individual as they explore what it is that they are seeking. This period ends with the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens.

The second period is known as the Period of the Catechumenate and is a time for study of the main principles of the faith (catechises). This period, like that of inquiry, has no set timescale and can last for a few months. During this time, those aspiring to become Christian are known as **catechumens** and those already Christian but aspiring to enter into full communion with the Catholic Church are known as **candidates**. The period comes to an end with the **Rite of Election**, which is held at the Cathedral and presided over by the Bishop on the First Sunday of Lent. All catechumens and candidates from around the Diocese attend and are enrolled for reception of the Sacraments of Initiation at Easter.

The third period is known as the Period of **Purification** and **Enlightenment**. It is a shorter period and coincides with the time of Lent. This is a period of more intense preparation for the reception of the Sacraments. A time of prayer, fasting and almsgiving with the whole Church sharing the experiences of the catechumens and candidates. The end of this period is marked by the Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation, that would normally take place at the Easter Vigil although it can happen at other times of the year if necessary. A final period, which begins the life as a Christian, is called a Period of **Mystagogy** or post baptismal catechesis. This period extends throughout the Easter season and is a time for deepening the Christian experience and entering more fully into the life of the Church.

RCIA is part of the Liturgy of the Church, which makes it a public act of worship. It is based on a shared faith that comes to us as a community and that is passed on within the community. Those inquiring about the faith and later those who are catechumens and candidates make up a community within the larger community of the parish and the Diocese. Thus, as much as God meets each of us intimately and individually, we journey towards Him together.

In this parish, registration for the RCIA programme opens on the first week of August. The first meeting for registered candidates and catechumens is on the second Thursday of September. Lessons begin on the third Thursday of September and continue until the last Thursday before Christmas. Lessons resume on the first Thursday of February and continue, whilst the candidates and the catechumens are taking their 'rites', which culminates at Easter vigil.

The RCIA programme is for:

- **Non-baptised individuals:** seeking to enter the Catholic Church.
- **Those baptised in another Christian faith:** who wish to join the Catholic Church.
- **Catholics who were baptised but did not complete their sacraments:** of initiation (Confirmation and Eucharist).
- **Adult Catholics:** who want to learn their faith more deeply or receive a refresher.

Frequently Asked Questions

What does the RCIA process involve?

The RCIA journey is a spiritual process marked by distinct stages:

1. **Inquiry (Pre-Catechumenate)**: A period for exploring the faith, asking questions, and developing a relationship with God.
2. **Catechumenate**: A time for deeper learning of Catholic teachings (catechesis), prayer, and formation within the parish community.
3. **Purification and Enlightenment**: A period of intense spiritual reflection and prayer just before receiving the Easter sacraments.
4. **Mystagogy**: Continued reflection and integration into the Church community after receiving the sacraments.

What are the key elements of the program?

- **Study and Teaching**: Learning the foundational beliefs and teachings of the Catholic Church.
- **Prayer and Spiritual Growth**: Developing a personal relationship with God through prayer and reflection.
- **Liturgical Rites**: Participating in specific ceremonies at Mass that mark significant gateways in the faith journey.
- **Community Formation**: Forming enduring spiritual bonds with sponsors and the RCIA team within a small faith community.
- **Sacraments of Initiation**: Upon completion, participants often receive the sacraments of Baptism (if unbaptised), Confirmation, and Eucharist.

How can I participate in RCIA?

The first step is to request a registration form by email stmaryandstpaulRC@gmail.com or pick up a form from the priest after one of our weekend Masses.

When and where does RCIA meet?

We meet Thursday nights from 6.30pm-8:00pm in the meeting room at St. Mary's Church, 29 Zetland Street, Dukinfield, SK16 4EJ from September to April. The start date for the programme is the third Thursday of September.

What is the format of the sessions?

The sessions begin with prayer, followed by teaching, questions and answers, and small group discussion. The session concludes with prayer.

What is the cost for attending RCIA?

There is no charge for attending the RCIA programme and resources are provided by the parish. There may be some costs incurred, for example travel costs to the Cathedral.

May I bring my Spouse/Fiancé to the session?

Yes, you may. We encourage your spouse/fiancé to attend the sessions with you.

If I have been baptised in another Church, do I need to be baptised again?

In most cases, you do not need to be baptised again. The Catholic Church requires that you were baptised with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. We will need a copy of your baptismal certificate or other proof of baptism from the church you were baptised.

I was told I need a sponsor (godparent) who is a baptised and confirmed Catholic, and is in good standing in the Catholic Church. What if I don't know anyone who could do that?

Don't worry about it. We have people who volunteer to fulfil the sponsor role.

Do I have to attend every session?

Our desire is to have you attend all sessions. RCIA is certainly a place where you will learn about the Catholic Church believes and teaches; however, it is much more than that. It is a process of getting to know Jesus Christ and growing together in community. RCIA is a process of conversion to a life with Christ. This process takes time and commitment on your part.

How many sessions can I miss?

RCIA is a building-block process, and each session builds on the one before. However, we realise that there may be situations which would cause someone to be unable to attend. Therefore, absences are handled on a case-by-case basis. If you must miss a session, arrangements can be made to provide you with a copy of the notes from that session.

Can a Catholic attend to learn more about their faith?

Yes, we have had many people do this in the past and would love to have you join us to learn more about your Catholic faith.

A recap: The Rite for the Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is a process to introduce the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church to individuals who wish to learn more about Catholicism, including the opportunity to become a Catholic through the sacrament of initiation. In addition, many Catholics attend the programme to learn more about their faith and have found the course to be both interesting and informative. RCIA is a time of teaching, formation, and conversion to come to know, love and develop a relationship with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Check out our website and newsletter for updates.