

# **OCIA at St. Paul's Church – What is this?**

**The Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA)** is a process developed by the Catholic Church for prospective converts to Catholicism who are above the age of infant baptism.

**The OCIA program involves several stages marked by study, prayer, and rites at Mass. It includes the following steps:**

Period of Inquiry (Evangelization and Pre-catechumenate):

This initial stage is a time for seekers to ask questions and learn about the Catholic faith without any commitment.

It's an informal period where they explore the basics of Christianity and Catholicism.

**Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens:**

If the inquirers decide to continue, they participate in this rite, which marks their intention to follow Christ and join the Church.

They are now referred to as catechumens.

**Period of the Catechumenate:**

This is a time of deeper formation and education in the faith.

Catechumens participate in catechesis (instruction in the faith), prayer, and the community life of the Church.

**Rite of Election or Enrollment of Names:**

Usually celebrated at the beginning of Lent, this rite involves the catechumens affirming their desire for the sacraments of initiation. They are then known as the Elect.

**Period of Purification and Enlightenment:**

This period coincides with Lent and is a time of intense spiritual preparation and reflection for the Elect, involving prayer, fasting, and penance.

**Sacraments of Initiation: At the Easter Vigil,**

the Elect receive the sacraments of Baptism (if not previously baptized), Confirmation, and the Eucharist, fully initiating them into the Catholic Church.

**Period of Mystagog:**

Following their initiation, the new members (now called neophytes) continue to study the faith, reflecting on their experiences and becoming more integrated into the Church community.

The RCIA process is not only for those who are unbaptized but also for baptized Christians from other denominations who wish to become Catholic. The program is designed to provide a comprehensive and supportive journey into the Catholic faith.