



*Holy Family, Clermont Co.*

HOLY TRINITY • ST. ANN • ST. LOUIS • ST. PHILOMENA

*We are united under the Cross of Christ*

## ORDER OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION (OCIA/RCIA)

### WELCOME!

We are excited to welcome you as you discern the invitation by God to become Catholic. You probably have a lot of questions and a few fears. What does this process look like? What is expected of me? How do I really know that this is the One, True Faith given to us by God Himself?

It is indeed a very big step and because of that we are not here to pressure you or move you too quickly through the process. The point of the classes is to give you time to pray, reflect, and discern along the way. Although many decide to become Catholic, others don't and that's okay. We are here to help, and to be a resource to guide you.

But understand, discernment is a two-way process. We don't force you to be Catholic and you can't force the Church to make you Catholic. This is why there is no precise time frame. Some could be within a year, others several years.

#### **The Initial Step**

Set up a meeting with a member of the OCIA team. During this initial meeting you will be asked to fill out paperwork and answer some questions about why you wish to be Catholic. If you are already baptized, a baptism certificate will be very helpful. We can also explain the process including the classes and other requirements.

#### **Who is eligible to become Catholic?**

The short answer is anyone. Anyone who is seeking to enter into a relationship with Christ and His Church and is willing to follow the teachings and practices of His Church moving forward. Conversion then is the key element.

#### **What does it mean to be received fully into the Catholic Church?**

When someone enters into the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil one will receive Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist if they are non-baptized. If someone is already validly baptized (hence proof of baptism) they will receive Confirmation and Eucharist since there is only one Baptism. Once someone is received, they have full membership in the Church and hold equal standing as any other Catholic.

### **Divorce or Multiple Marriages:**

Sadly, given that our society today is unaware of God's plan for marriage and families, many have taken paths that contradict His teachings. For example: Divorce and remarriage. Marriage is permanent whether civilly or religiously. Before one can become Catholic that situation must be corrected. In other words, one would need to receive a declaration of nullity (Annulment).

An annulment must be received for each marriage that has ended in divorce. It does not matter if the marriage took place in a civil or in a religious ceremony. Speak with a member of the OCIA Team if you have been divorced. Generally, annulments take a year.

### **Did you get married in the Catholic Church?**

Only a Catholic is required to get married in and by the Catholic Church. However, sometime a Catholic marries a non-Catholic, outside the Catholic Church. If you are married to a Catholic and did not have a Catholic ceremony, that marriage must be blessed by the Church prior to becoming Catholic.

### **Cohabitation – Living Together**

A couple living together is not the ideal situation nor does it benefit society. Living together is morally wrong for a Catholic. Therefore, this situation must be corrected before becoming Catholic. If you are interested in pursuing marriage with this person, speak with the OCIA team to inquire about marriage preparation classes.

### **Gender**

Another area where the world has faced confusion with God's plan is on the topic of gender – “Self-identifying”. “*God created them male and female.*” It is God who created us male or female. One cannot become Catholic if they reject this most basic biological principle. We are here to help those who are “confused” or don't understand why this thinking is morally disordered. One is welcomed in the Church by the sex God made us. In addition, marriage can only be between a biological male and female. Same sex relationships (cohabitation) are contrary to God's and will not be tolerated for one seeking unity with His Church.

### **How long is the process to become Catholic?**

Again, it depends on several factors. There is no specific time frame. It all depends on the person's willingness and freedom to become Catholic. Some may do so within the year, others several years. If the candidate is seeking baptism that can only occur at the Easter Vigil (March/April). However, if the person is not ready at that time, they will have to wait until the next Easter Vigil. Or perhaps the one after that. The goal is long-term commitment; therefore, it should not be taken lightly or be rushed.

### **Children**

Children will only be accepted into the OCIA process if the parents are practicing Catholic or if the parents decide themselves to become Catholic at the same time. Sadly, in the past, many parents have wanted their children to become Catholic but are not willing to do the same. This does not help the children live out their Catholic Faith. Therefore, children will not be accepted on their own. Above the age of 7, a child must go through the OCIA. This means baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist. If a parent is Catholic and had recently decided to have their child or children become Catholic, he/she must attend Sunday Mass moving forward.

### **OCIA Classes - Required**

Classes are held regularly on Tuesday evening from 6:30-8:30pm. Most classes will be weekly, some bi-weekly, and of course there will be some breaks. But understand this is a big step, a life-changing moment. Therefore, the expectation is you are serious and will take this seriously. One who is not willing to make every effort to attend the classes and Sunday Masses will be deemed unready to be welcomed into the Church that year. It will be delayed until one is ready. We cannot allow you to be short changed!

### **Sunday Mass Attendance - Required**

Mass is both a privilege and obligation for Catholics. Yes, this means every Sunday. Missing Mass is a deadly sin. We do not want to subject anyone to damnation if they are unwilling to honor the most basic and most beautiful aspect of our Faith – The HOLY SACRIFICE of the MASS.

### **Being a Parishioner**

It is expected that if you attend OCIA at a specific parish then you are desiring to be a future parishioner there. A parishioner is one who belongs to a local community. They participate in the Liturgical Life of the parish, to support it financially, and are active in the various ministries and socials events. A parish is a community, and a community is only as vibrant as its members. If you truly want to be Catholic, it means fellowship. But you are also a member of the Universal (Catholic) Church, which means you can also go to Mass anywhere in the world. We are the One Body, here on earth and in heaven.

### **Questions?**

I am sure there are many questions, hence why there is a process like this. Generally, every question that someone has asked has been addressed during these classes. But please don't stop asking questions. Gaining the answer is easy, understanding the why behind it is hard. We are here to help you understand the why and lead you to a deep, intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, Lord, and Savior of the Universe.

## Acceptance of Condition

This document is in no way legally binding for either party. You are free to withdraw at any time in the process. But it is good for you to acknowledge upfront the information we presented in this brochure.

Your signature simply acknowledges that have read the brochure and at this time are open to learning and discerning your future entrance into the Catholic Church.

Part of this discernment involves attending classes, praying, and attending Mass every Sunday, etc.

You acknowledge that you have been straight forward in your desire and understand those things that make one eligible to be a Catholic. And that you are open to learn about the Catholic Teachings and Tradition as part of your discernment process.

We, as the parish, place no requirements that you must become Catholic or imply that you will become Catholic if the parish determines otherwise.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_