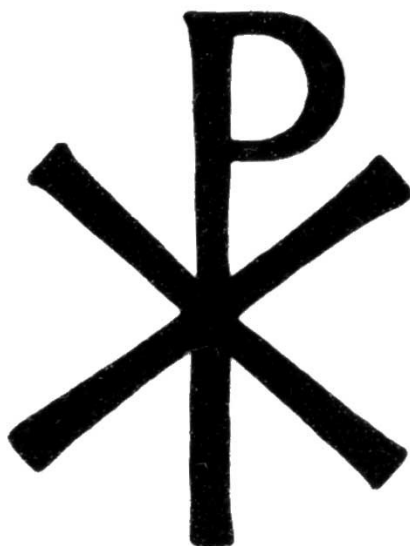


INTRODUCTION



Adult Catechesis

This program of studies was developed to help those wishing to receive instruction for entering into the Catholic Church as adults, but it may have other applications as well (for example, adults seeking confirmation). In parishes without the resources or numbers to erect a formal RCIA program, it is thought that a program of self study would be useful, and one that can be overseen by a priest or a parish catechist. The materials herein attempt to strike a balance between being useful to the seeking soul, and not being overly scholarly. This program strives to be simply a good, solid and reasonable formation for the average inquirer. We hope to establish obtainable goals, some measure of adaptability (based on the individual's needs) and to present materials in such a way as it is most useful for home study. We also want it to be affordable, with a multi-media approach.

- This “course” will involve seven lessons that will be more or less self taught, although they will involve follow up with the priest or catechist. We suggest you print out these seven lessons, and keep them in a three ring binder, and that you keep copies of all the questionnaires, letters and paperwork you give to the parish as well.

- We will recommend a number of books throughout this course of studies, but you will be required to read at least three books (a brief catechism, a history of the Church and a work on apologetics).
- We will recommend numerous websites for your consideration as we move through these “lessons”
- There will be homework and questionnaires that are part of each lesson that helps one to stay on task. We would also ask you to meet with the priest or catechist briefly at certain points throughout our work together.
- While ideally the Easter vigil is the best time for adults to come into the Church, we are also opened to other times, just so long as we are being attentive to making sure an individual is properly formed and prepared.

If you are beginning this process, it is important to keep in mind the following things.

- First, you are discerning God’s will. You cannot discern God’s will entirely through your intellect. It is important to read and to study and to learn, but it is equally important to pray, and to ask the Lord for guidance. Some people start this process, and don’t finish it. Some of those who don’t finish it will sometimes come back years later more determined to finish. [Just because you’re interested in looking more intently into the Catholic Church doesn’t mean you are necessarily ready to leap in all at once. Be open to the Spirit, and pray for guidance.](#)
- Secondly, the average Catholic was baptized as an infant and knew nothing about the faith on the day of his baptism. It is also possible to confirm infants in danger of death as well, so knowledge is not critical for becoming Catholic, but it is essential to being Catholic. The Catholic Church founded most of the ancient universities in the world, and we highly respect education, and to whatever extent a person is able to grasp intellectually our faith, we hope to achieve that. And so, as an adult interested in learning more about Catholicism, we do require you to know what it is you are seeking to become, and so for you, catechesis is necessary. Catechesis is a word that is more or less specific to Christian instruction, and it is a way of communicating the faith orally by asking questions, and by communicating the theology and faith of the Catholic Church through teaching. This Church was founded by Jesus Christ, our Savior, and our Faith has been passed along through the generations since his resurrection through catechesis.
- You are going to have lots of questions, but hopefully by going through this material, you will find the answers you seek. Don’t hesitate to ask

the questions. Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened. Do not be afraid to seek the Truth, for he wants you to find him.

Some Upfront Questions

First of all, you should appreciate that the Catholic Church is deeply respectful of the sacraments. Sacraments (as you will learn) are official means in which we are bound to the Lord, and through which we find communion with the Lord, who uses these mysteries to pour out his grace. Therefore, in the sacramental life, we have certain questions that we need to ask before we can proceed.

Regarding the sacraments, the first sacrament of the Church is **Baptism**, and through baptism one becomes a Christian. Catholics have, from the beginning, generally accepted the baptisms of other Christians who were separated from us.¹ Some of you will need to be baptized. Some of you will not need to be baptized. As a general rule we do not re-baptize people.

Confirmation. Some of you may have been baptized as Catholics, but not confirmed. We shall work towards your being confirmed as part of our goal, so that you will be fully integrated into the Catholic Communion. Some of you may have been baptized in another faith tradition, but you will need to be confirmed within the Catholic Church. While we do accept the baptisms of most non-Catholic Christians, we would need everyone to be validly confirmed within the Catholic Church so as to be fully initiated into this ancient faith.

Holy Communion. We would ask those coming into the Catholic Church not to receive Holy Communion until they are fully integrated into the Church. Holy Communion will be the consummation of our work together, and it is the sign that one is fully Catholic, but we need to have a deeper appreciation of this sacrament, and to be prepared before we presume to receive Holy Communion. Those who are baptized Catholics, but who have not been

¹ Throughout our history, other churches would break away and continue to baptize people, and assuming we could accept their baptism as properly Christian; we would respect that baptism, and *not* re-baptize someone who sought to enter into the Catholic Church. Most of those other Christian groups have disappeared over the ages, but new ones continue to emerge throughout our history. While some of those groups may not accept Catholic baptism, the Catholic Church generally will accept their baptisms. Baptism integrates a person into the Catholic Church, but we see this integration as *partial*. We are hoping to *fully* integrate you into the Church.

confirmed, may continue to receive communion, assuming they have been to the sacrament of reconciliation (or confession) recently, and are in a state of grace.

Confession. We will learn more about that, but this is also an important means through which we grow in holiness and find greater communion with the Lord.

Holy Matrimony, and here there may be obstacles for us to overcome. Christ our Lord has the deepest respect for marriage, and so we have to consider your marriage status before we proceed. Any divorce in your past or in your spouse's past can be an obstacle for any rapid conversion into Catholicism, and so it is important to know about them as soon as possible.

There are other sacraments, which we will learn more about over time, but for now, let us concentrate on the following questionnaire, that will help us establish how we can proceed.

Homework Follows

- Fill out the questionnaire that follows, and write a letter (dated and signed) stating your intention of seeking further instruction into the Catholic Church and into Her teachings. Once you have done these things, you can make an appointment with the priest.
- Purchase and begin to read the COMPENDIUM of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. You should be able to order this book online. ISBN 978-1-57455-720-6.
- Explore online (if possible) the website entitled CATHOLICS COME HOME. You may also want to wander onto the VATICAN website for further information. Consider also the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN) which has not only a website but also a cable television channel.

Preliminary Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions, and return this information to us.

1. Your name:
2. Address:
3. Phone number:
4. Another phone number:
5. Email address:
6. Which is the way you would prefer us to contact you?
7. Birthday:
8. Were you raised in any faith tradition or religion, and if so, what was it?
9. Are you baptized?
10. If yes, what was the church or denomination, and in which city or state?
11. If you were baptized, what was the date?
12. If you have been baptized, you will need to contact the church or parish where you were baptized and ask them to send us an official copy of your baptismal certificate. If the church where you were baptized does not send baptismal certificates, I would ask you to have them send a letter of their stationary, telling us the date of the baptism.
13. If you have ever been baptized more than once, you might let us know. We would generally only accept the first baptism as the real baptism, but it is also important that a person should be baptized in a proper Trinitarian Formula (I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit).
14. Are you currently married?
15. Is this your first marriage?

16. Is this your spouse's first marriage?
17. If you have been divorced, then you will need to meet with the priest regarding further questions.²
18. If your spouse has been divorced, then you will need to meet with the priest regarding further questions.³
19. Are you acting on your own free will to seek to learn more about the Catholic Church and discerning God's will in regards to the possibility of entering more fully into Communion with the Catholic Church?
20. Please write for us a letter explaining your intention to begin this process, including how you came to begin this search. Copy the letter for your files, and sign and date a copy for our files. Once you have written this letter, and filled out this form, you can call to set up an appointment with the priest, who will place this letter and questionnaire on file at the parish.

² Please give the following details (on the back of this page) for each of your former spouses: a) Name of your former spouse(s), b) Was this ex-spouse a baptized Catholic? c) Was this ex-spouse a baptized Christian? d) Were you married in the Catholic Church? e) Had this spouse ever been married before? f) Is this former spouse living or deceased?

³ Please give the following details (on the back of this page) for each of the former spouses of your current spouse: a) Name of your current spouse b) Is your current spouse a baptized Catholic? c) Is your current spouse a baptized Christian? d) For each divorce, please let us know the name of the ex-spouse of your current spouse b) Was that ex-spouse of a baptized Catholic? c) Was that spouse a baptized Christian? d) Had that ex-spouse been married before? e) Was your former spouse married in the Catholic Church? f) Was this ex-spouse divorced before your spouse married them? g) Is this former spouse living or deceased?