

During the catechumenate, the catechumens and candidates take part in the Sunday Liturgy of the Word. The catechumens leave the assembly after the homily so that they can explore the Scripture and the liturgy more fully. This step is characterized by:

- reflection on the Scriptures
- exploration of the richness of Catholic Tradition
- experiences in prayer and worship
- introduction to the apostolic life

Ideally, since catechumens need more formation, candidates and catechumens are in different groups during this period.

Leave your country and come into the land I will show you.

Genesis 12:1

Liturgical Rite:

The Rite of Sending of Catechumens for Election / Call to Continuing Conversion

Period of Purification and Enlightenment, usually coincides with the liturgical season of Lent. Lent is celebrated by the whole Church as a special season of reconciliation, prayer and spiritual renewal.

The candidates and catechumens join with the Christian Community to:

- enter more deeply into prayer and reflection
- journey with Jesus on His path of suffering, death, and Resurrection

- prepare for the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation

Your ways, Oh Lord, are love and truth to those who keep your covenant.

Psalm 25

Liturgical Rite:

Rite of Full Initiation at the Easter Vigil

Mystagogia, a Greek term that means to “enter more deeply into the mystery,” is the final stage of OCIA. Mystagogia is a lifelong stage of conversion. This stage is marked by:

- participation in the Eucharist
- immersion into the missionary spirit of the Catholic Church
- immersion into the kerygma

For more information on the process of OCIA, please contact your local Catholic Church. You may also contact Erin McGeever, Diocesan Director of Christian Formation, at (904)262-0661, or emcgeever@dosaf1.com. She can put you directly in touch with the individual who leads the OCIA at the closest Catholic Church.

You are “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so you may announce the praises” of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

I Peter 2:9

Local contact information

O.C.I.A.

Order of Christian Initiation

of Adults

and

Children of Catechetical Age



An Informational Guide for
Exploring the Catholic Faith in
the

Diocese of St. Augustine

*Office of
Christian Formation*
(Updated 12-5-2025)

What is O.C.I.A.?

The Order of Christian Initiation of Adults, OCIA is a process of discernment, prayer, study, service, worship, apprenticeship, discussion, faith sharing and celebration for:

✠ Unbaptized adults and children of catechetical age who wish to learn more about the faith and the possibility of becoming Catholic.

✠ Baptized Christians from other faiths who want to learn more about the Catholic faith and possibly become Catholic.

✠ Baptized Catholics who have not received the Sacraments of First Eucharist and Confirmation and who desire to enter fully into the community of the Catholic faith.

✠ Children baptized Catholic or in another faith who are not catechized also participate at their own level in the OCIA process.

The length of the OCIA process differs for everyone. The normal timeframe for an adult to be active in the OCIA process is 1-3 liturgical years. It can be shorter for those already baptized with some formation.

Children in the Diocese of St. Augustine participate in the process of OCIA for 2 years and sometimes longer.

Background and History

During the first centuries of Christianity, persons who desired to be followers of Jesus engaged in a thorough period of prayer, preparation, instruction, and apprenticeship all set within the Christian Community. They spent one to three years in formation in what became known as the **catechumenate**.

The term **catechumen** simply means one who is learning. Throughout the process of preparation, the catechumens became immersed in the teachings of Jesus and in the prayer life of the Church. This period of immersion ended with the reception of the sacraments of initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and First Eucharist—in that order, at Easter. The process generally took several years.

During the fifth century, after Christianity became legal, large numbers of people desired to be Christian. The catechumenate slowly disappeared and people were brought into the Church without much preparation.

Following Vatican II, the Catholic Church returned to this earlier formation process, now called the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults. Every parish in the Diocese of Augustine is expected to offer an OCIA process.

Basic Concepts of the OCIA

✠ Conversion is a process involving both the mind and the heart.

✠ The OCIA takes place among the community of believers.

✠ The OCIA follows the flow of the liturgical seasons, and its stages are marked by liturgical rites.

✠ The OCIA process encourages authentic Catholic faith.

The Process Explained:

The process of OCIA consists of four periods, each with its own focus. Each period ends with the celebration of a ritual marking the end of one step and the beginning of the next step.

Period of Inquiry is a time of “Come and See” wherein the inquirer has time to:

- hear the faith stories of Catholics
- ask initial questions
- learn about the parish
- foster initial conversion
- prayer and discernment

**Lord, let your mercy be on us as we place
our trust in you.**

Psalm 33

Liturgical Rite:

*Rite of Entrance into the Catechumenate and
of Welcoming Candidates into the
Catechumenate*

Period of the Catechumenate marks the beginning of formal instruction in the faith. Catechumens are unbaptized inquirers seeking instruction with a view toward baptism. Inquirers from another Christian denomination are called candidates because of their prior baptism. When catechumens and candidates enter this stage, the community assigns each one a sponsor, a member of the faith community who will accompany them on their faith journey.