

How long are we talking about?

*For someone who is not baptized, the process usually takes a year. For those who come from active practice and formation in another Christian tradition, the time could vary from four to six to eight months.*

When is the best time to begin this process?

*We encourage you to listen to God's call and respond! We hope to have an ongoing process so you will be welcomed any time you contact us. Because Easter is the usual time for initiation, we usually gather a group of people to begin the process of inquiry at the end of August or in early September.*

What does a person do who might be interested in the Catholic Church?

*Call the Church office at 443-3470. Ask for Sr. Pat Hall to talk through any questions you may have or to see if this process is for you.*



## **Sacred Heart Church**

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# ***How does a person become a Catholic?***



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*We have a process that is individualized for each person depending upon his/her faith background and experience. There are four basic stages in this process; movement through these stages can vary with each person. If a person is unbaptized, the faith journey could be longer and somewhat different from a person who has been baptized and formed in another church community.*

Tell me about these "stages."

The first stage or period is called **Inquiry**. This is a time of searching, asking questions and the beginning of the communal journey of faith formation or enrichment. This time lasts as long as needed for basic questions to be answered and for a person to discern if God is calling him/her to the Catholic community. When a person is ready and we agree, we celebrate a ritual in church with the Sunday assembly for a **Celebration of Acceptance and Welcoming**. This is an introduction of you to us and us to you in a ritual way as you are accepted as a member of our church, although you are not fully initiated.

What happens during these inquiry sessions?

These are more like conversations than "classes." Inquirers set the agenda with their questions; there are no tests, teachers or homework. It is a time to explore basic teachings and practices of the church and to deepen the initial call to faith through hearing the "good news."



What comes next?

The second stage or period is called the **Catechumenate**. This is an ancient word that means a time of deepening of faith and identity through prayer, instruction and formation of conscience. This is the longest period. We invite "candidates" to join us for the first part of the Sunday worship service which is the celebration of Scripture. After hearing God's Word, they are dismissed to "break open the Word" to discover what God is speaking to them and to the Catholic community. We spend some time exploring Catholic Doctrine and/or practices related to this world. This period culminates with the **Rite of Election**. If the Person is to be initiated

at Easter (which is the norm but not the only time), this ritual is celebrated with the bishop in the cathedral in Jefferson City with all the other persons who are preparing for entrance into the Catholic community. If a person is to be initiated at a time other than Easter, this ritual can be adapted for celebration at Sacred Heart Church.

What is the third stage?

This is a shorter period of immediate preparation. For those who will be initiated at Easter, this is the six-week Lenten period. For others, the time frame can be adapted. It is a reflective, prayerful time with ritual prayers celebrated with the Sunday community. This stage culminates with the **Rite of Initiation**. For the unbaptized, initiation consists of baptism, confirmation and Eucharist. Those who have been baptized, make a profession of faith, are confirmed and receive Eucharist.



What is the fourth stage?

This is a time called **mystagogia**, another ancient word that means reflection on the mysteries. During this time we meet after the Sunday Eucharist to help you reflect on your initiation experience and make the transition into full Catholic life.

Why is this such a long and involved process?

Becoming a Catholic Christian is entering into a "way of life." More than just getting some information, it is formation by a living community with along tradition. The heart of this process is "conversion," an initial or deepening experience of God, faith and formation by God's Word. Although God effects this conversion, we need time to grow into some new attitudes, practices, beliefs, etc.