

Becoming a Catholic

1. What if I've never been baptised/christened?

If you have never been baptised into any Christian community and want to become a Catholic, the first step is to pray about this, to come to Mass for a period of time to experience the community at prayer and only then to approach either the parish priest, the deacon or one of the parish sisters to let them know of your sense of wanting to become a Catholic.

Each year, starting around September, weekly evenings take place at which both prayer and aspects of Catholic faith are explored in a way and at a depth that feels comfortable for those taking part. These evenings are set within the context of prayer and different ways of praying are gradually also explored. These evenings are usually with Deacon Bill at his family home.

There is no set timetable and no hurry towards Baptism. Each person takes as long as they feel is right – sometimes dropping in for some evenings over a period of years. The important thing is not learning about faith but deepening the reality of faith and a relationship with God that already exists and may be drawing you to begin the journey towards joining the Catholic Church.

At some stage during your journey towards being baptised and becoming a Catholic, you will be welcomed into the community of the parish as a Catechumen – an ancient name for those preparing for Baptism. This step is about the community supporting you and recognising God at work in your journey.

The Baptism of an adult (sometimes with their children) usually takes place within a parish Sunday Mass and often around Easter time. When an adult is baptized they are also confirmed into the Church at the same Mass and then receive their first Holy Communion. In this way adults receive all three sacraments of initiation celebrated together, a practice dating from the Early Church.

After their Baptism, the support of the evenings continues until the new Catholic feels they are ready to continue the practice of their faith without this support.

2. “But I am already baptised into another Christian denomination...”

Again, the first step is to get to experience something of the parish and the Mass. The Mass is the community's central act of prayer and worship. After you have come to Mass for a period of time you may want to approach the parish priest by

phone, e mail or after Mass to introduce yourself and ask about becoming a Catholic. Alternatively, approach Deacon Bill or one of the parish sisters by phone, e mail or after Mass.

It is important to know that the Catholic Church recognises your Baptism as the same as ours if it was, as Jesus taught, “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”. Your journey towards becoming a Catholic is from an already existing relationship with God as a Christian. Through weekly evenings over a period of some months, and without any pressure or expectation that you will choose to become a Catholic, you will be able to discover and explore aspects of Catholic faith, many of which you may already be familiar with and which you may have long already believed.

If, after a period of reflection, you decide that God is calling you into the fullness of Catholic faith, you will be helped to prepare for the Sacraments of Confirmation, Reconciliation and Holy Communion.

During your Confirmation Mass, at which you will be able to receive Holy Communion for the first time within the Catholic Church, you will be Confirmed into the Catholic Church, having declared that you believe “all that the Catholic Church believes, teaches and proclaims to be revealed by God”.

Support for you as a new Catholic within the parish will continue as long as you feel you need it.