

# *Welcome To St. Gerards Catholic Church*

“Jesus Christ loves you; He gave His life to save you; and now He is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you.”  
- Pope Francis -

Are you curious about what’s involved in becoming a Catholic, or perhaps you have already made the decision to join the Catholic Church. Each year men and women embark on an exploration of the Catholic faith. OCIA – Order of Christian Initiation of Adults affords people an opportunity to explore their faith anew.

Either way, we want to reassure you that the Catholic Church will never pressure you to sign up or rush your journey. In fact, you may find that the process takes longer than you expected. This is because joining the Church involves a serious commitment to both God and your local Catholic community, and it’s a decision that shouldn’t be taken lightly.

## Two Key Steps: Instruction and Community Involvement

So, where do we begin. Well, there are two essential aspects to becoming a Catholic:

1. **Receiving Instruction in the Faith:** Learning about the teachings, beliefs, and practices of the Catholic Church. Many parishes refer to their instruction group as **OCIA (Order of Christian Initiation of Adults)** which can take up to a year beginning in the fall and culminating at Easter Vigil.
2. **Participating in the Local Catholic Community:** Attending Mass and becoming involved in parish life.

You can begin with either of these steps, but before becoming a full member of the Catholic faith, you will need to have completed both sufficient instruction and have attended regular services.

## Doubts? The Catholic Church Welcomes You!

If you’re unsure whether the Catholic Church would welcome you, please “Come and See”!

The Catholic faith holds high standards, but it also offers second chances. No matter who you are, the Church will welcome you as long as you sincerely seek to follow the teachings of Jesus as understood by the Catholic Church.

If you were baptized in another faith, the Catholic Church also recognizes Baptism in other Christian faiths where the Baptism is performed in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

## Learning About the Faith

Many parishes offer OCIA group sessions for those considering becoming Catholic. These groups provide a space to learn more about the faith alongside others on a similar journey.

In smaller parishes, you may also receive **one-on-one instruction** from the parish priest, Deacon or a trained catechist (a trusted instructor from the local congregation).

As Catholics we witness to the fact that our search is a **lifelong journey**, a journey on which we make the most progress when we walk it with others in the community and with intention. We are eager to accompany you on this journey, and to celebrate with those desiring to receive the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist).

**We invite you – God invites you!**

Are you being **drawn toward the Catholic Church** or maybe you can't quite explain why, but something or someone is pulling you to a new faith or coming back to the faith.

**OCIA could be the moment that changes everything**—where a quiet curiosity becomes a real encounter with Jesus Christ. OCIA is designed to draw participants into a living relationship with God - **to know the faith and live it... a genuine formation of the whole person — mind, heart, and soul.**

We are here to help and we look forward to hearing from you. We also provide an **OCIA registration form, additional info on OCIA, and Role of Sponsors** on our website.

Deacon Chuck Cooper 815-985-3636  
Linda Cooper 815-985-3637