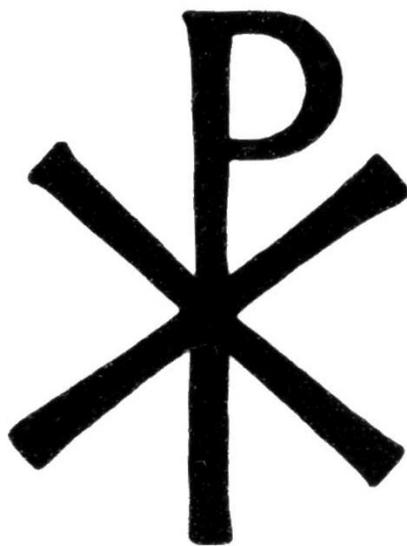


INTRODUCTION



Adult Catechesis

THE OLM BECOMING CATHOLIC PROCESS

Our Lady of the Mountains Roman Catholic Church in Jasper, GA, believes:

"[K]nowledge is not critical for *becoming* Catholic [since Catholics baptize infants], but it is essential for *being* Catholic"
(Rev. Charles A. Byrd, Jr., Original *Becoming Catholic* Introduction, p.2).

So, catechesis (or education in the faith) is necessary for adults seeking to become Catholic. Moreover, Pope St. John Paul II declared:

"At the heart of catechesis we find, in essence, a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, the only Son from the Father ... who suffered and died for us and who now, after rising, is living with us forever.' ... Catechesis aims at putting 'people ... in communion ... with Jesus Christ: only he can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity."

Catechism of the Catholic Church no. 426 (LEV/USCCB 2nd Ed. 2000), quoting Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Catechesis in Our Time* no. 5 (1979). See, *Compendium for the Catechism of the Catholic Church* no. 80 (USCCB 2006).

The OLM process is found at [www.olmjasper.com/joinus/becoming catholic](http://www.olmjasper.com/joinus/becoming_catholic). It consists of an Introduction and seven lessons, each with its own questionnaire, in effect a "programmed-learning" approach, guided by the Pastor and a Coordinator.

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, adult Catholics 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 and 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 (see appendix A).
- We will also recommend numerous websites for your consideration as we move through these “lessons:” these will be identified in hyperlinks.
- 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.
- 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

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.

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 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

- Contact Pam Gardner, *Becoming Catholic* Parish Coordinator, for further information about the process:
pgardner54@live.com or (678) 770-7868.
- Print yourself from the parish website a copy of the *Becoming Catholic* Introduction and seven lessons, including all questionnaires. Three hole punch the document and place it in a three ring binder: it will be useful for telephone and e-mail communications with the Parish Coordinator, as well as for personal study. Begin to read the *Compendium*.
- Ask the Coordinator for a "loaner" copy from the parish library of the ***Compendium for the Catechism of the Catholic Church*** (USCCB 2006), while you order your own personal copy. This is the basic text used for the *Becoming Catholic* process. It is a summary ("cliff notes," if you will) to the *Catechism*, called by Pope St. John Paul II at its initial 1992 publication "a sure and authentic reference text for teaching Catholic doctrine."
- In addition to your personal and contact information solicited by *Preliminary Questionnaire* nos. 1-8, please add as no. 21, the full name of your spouse if married, as well as the full names of your children.

- Separately under no. 7, also indicate the full name of your Father and the full ***maiden*** name of your Mother. (This information will be included in the OLM Baptism and/or Confirmation records maintained by the Catholic Church, in the event you ultimately become Catholic).
- Did you receive Baptism in a Protestant denomination? If so, was it by immersion or by pouring over your head; and "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt. 28: 19)? If so, please determine whether among your belongings, or your family's, there exists a *certificate of your Baptism*, which would include date of Baptism, church name and denomination, church address, and church telephone number. See, *Preliminary Questionnaire* nos. 9-13 and footnote 1; and ***discuss this very important subject with the Coordinator at your first meeting.***
- See also, *Preliminary Questionnaire* nos. 14-18 and footnotes 2 and 3, with respect to marriage, which you also need to ***discuss with the Coordinator at your first meeting.***
- Finally, see also, *Preliminary Questionnaire* nos. 19 and 20. Please discuss with the Coordinator at your first meeting writing a ***letter to the Pastor***, explaining in your own words how you came to become interested in exploring the Catholic faith, signing and dating it, for the Coordinator to give to the Pastor, along with a copy of your completed *Preliminary*

Questionnaire. Keep a copy of both documents for your own records.

- Introduce yourself to the OLM Pastor (if you have not done so already) after Mass on Saturday afternoon [4:00 pm in English and 6:00 pm in Spanish] or Sunday morning [8:30 and 11:00 am, both in English]. And, call the parish office ((706) 253-3078) to make an appointment to meet with the Pastor on a mutually convenient date and at a mutually convenient time, letting him know that the Coordinator has already forwarded to him your Preliminary Questionnaire and letter requesting to begin the *Becoming Catholic* process.

* * *

- Explore online (if possible) the website entitled [CATHOLICS COME HOME](#). You may also want to wander onto the [VATICAN](#) website for further information or see an electronic version of the Catechism of the Catholic Church ([CCC](#)). 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

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?

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.