

Christian Initiation

Saint John Neumann Church Guide & Calendar, 2025-2026

Sessions meet on Sundays after the 11:00 a.m. Mass
in the Thomas Aquinas Room,
on the lower level of the Faith & Family Center.

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What is it? Who is it for?

The Order of Christian Initiation (OCI) is for those wanting to learn about Christian faith and enter more deeply into the sacramental life of the Catholic Church. It's *not* a “class,” or a “program,” or a “process,” but a ministry that's part of the mission of St. John Neumann Church to lead people to a transformative encounter with Jesus Christ.

OCI happens with weekly, in-person small-group-based discussions, video presentations, and live speakers on Catholic life, belief and practice. There are also retreat experiences and public celebrations at different times of the year. Participants take part in this formation until they are ready to take the next steps appropriate for them and the community.

We receive new Inquirers throughout the year. Participants are usually adults, including those with some previous religious experience, as well as baptized Catholic adults wanting to complete their initiation. Those children aged seven to fourteen years may take part as long as they obtain adequate religious formation through either the SJN *Family of Faith* program, or by attending an accredited Catholic school.

What is required?

The first part of OCI will lead Inquirers through Scripture, prayer, and friendly conversation to an encounter with Jesus as the fullness of the revelation of God. This is voluntary, and with no obligations. Once an Inquirer (and their Sponsor) agree to move forward with the *Rite of Entrance* or *Rite of Welcome*, there is a public commitment.

Sacramental Formation takes time.

Those preparing for Baptism could need a full year or more of continual progress and experience in the life of our Church; they usually receive this Sacrament, along with Confirmation and Eucharist, at the following Easter Vigil. Participants already baptized and with a prior religious background – including practicing (or returning) Catholics - may need less time, depending on their circumstances. These individuals may be received into Full Communion with the Catholic Church and/or receive the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist at different times of the year - usually during the liturgical season of Christmas, or at the Vigil Mass of Pentecost.

What does it look like?

Beginning before Baptism: Precatechumenate

Everything begins when a person contacts our Parish Office and says something like, “I want to be baptized,” or, “I’d like to know more about the Catholic Church.” A person should contact the Evangelization Director and schedule an interview before attending sessions. The Interview is a one-on-one discussion to exchange basic information, address difficulties or challenges, and answer immediate or lingering questions. Prospective Inquirers should provide information about themselves – a completed *Inquirer Form* and, if available, documentation of their Baptism. When the prospective Inquirer is ready, then next steps can begin.

How does the Church look at Marriage?

- Inquirers who are engaged to be married will be shown how OCI can work with – but *never* secondary to – all those wedding preparations. OCI can take place during the course of pre-marital preparation as required by the Diocese.
- Inquirers who have been previously married, or currently engaged/married to a spouse with a previous marriage, should be ready to discuss their situation.

Preparing an Inquirer’s marriage to be recognized by the Church *must happen* before they celebrate the Rite of Election or receive the Sacraments. Working with the Director and the Diocesan Tribunal requires an investment of time. Please carefully consider this process, offered at no charge, before making future plans.

Rites of Entrance & Welcome

Those who have had an encounter with Jesus Christ and are willing to move toward Baptism take part in their first public ritual, known as the *Rite of Entrance into the Order of Catechumens*, celebrated at a Mass. This completes the first stage of Christian Initiation, and opens the door to the second.

Those already baptized as Christians in another tradition (including baptized Catholics who have not yet received all the Sacraments of Initiation) take part in the *Rite of Welcome*. The Church and the community recognize their oneness with the Candidates in Baptism. Because of the “one baptism” that we as Catholics profess to share, the baptized *Candidates* are distinct from the unbaptized, who become known as *Catechumens*.

Training & Practice: Catechumenate

The second stage is a period of training in the Christian way of life: belief, worship, living a moral life, and a life of prayer. They will continually view their motivations for Baptism, live an upright life, and be ready to witness to their conversion to Christ as they seek to grow in knowledge of and assent to what the Church believes and teaches. The word catechumenate is derived from a term in Greek, meaning “to echo back” something that has been taught.

There are several groups at this point: *Catechumens* who are unbaptized, *Candidates* who are already baptized, newer Inquirers who come in during the year, and even those who are already Catholic and wanting to resume their own initiation or simply continue their own formation.

This period – which will be different for everyone – allows participants to learn about the Scriptures and the doctrines and practices of our Church. Ordinarily, a person who enters Catechumenate remains in it from at least the Easter Season of one year until the beginning of the Easter Season of the next year; preferably it should begin before Lent in one year and extend until Easter of the following year. Study and reflection are a part of their formation which helps them prepare for the day when they will receive the Body and Blood of Christ. They also learn about Catholic prayer and worship. They develop their own relationship with the parish community they are seeking to join. When they have experienced a true conversion to the Christian way of life, they celebrate the next major ritual.

Rite of Election

Immediately following Ash Wednesday (which in 2026 is on February 18), the next rituals happen on the First Sunday of Lent. First, there is the *Parish Rite of Sending* at Mass, as a way of recognizing the Catechumens' final period of preparation. At that same time there is a *Call to Continuing Conversion* to give support to our Candidates also preparing for Easter. Soon afterward, the *Rite of Election*, a diocesan-wide celebration, led by our Bishop – the head of our local Church – involving every Catechumen from every Catholic parish in our diocese. Accompanied by their Sponsors, are formally declared by the Bishop as *the Elect* - “chosen by God” - to receive the Sacraments of Initiation at Easter.

Lent: Purification & Enlightenment

During this final period, the Elect purify their minds and hearts by celebrating several rituals. Three *Scrutinies* take place on the Third, Fourth and Fifth Sundays of Lent, to strengthen the Elect and help them to complete their conversion. The *Presentation of the Creed* and the *Presentation of the Lord's Prayer* also enlighten the minds of the Elect in the final weeks of their preparation for the sacraments, and help the Candidates to strengthen their own baptismal commitment.

Lent comes to an end when the sacred *Triduum* – the “three days” of Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter – begins at sunset on the Thursday of Holy Week. Finally, the *Preparatory Rites* on Holy Saturday morning serve as the Elect's most immediate preparation for the Sacraments. They will formally recite the *Nicene Creed* for the first time, and join the community in preparing for the celebrations that night, at long last, at the *Easter Vigil*.

The Sacraments of Initiation

The Elect receive their Initiation Sacraments first, after dark on the evening of Holy Saturday: Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, in the proper and ancient order. They are plunged into the waters of new birth, and come out of those waters reborn in Christ. Then they become configured to Christ through the Sacred Chrism (consecrated oil) of Confirmation. Finally, the culmination of their initiation happens when they taste the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Eucharist for the first time, in this most holy point of the Church's entire calendar.

On the Vigil of Pentecost (May 23 in 2026), 50 days after the Easter Vigil, the already baptized Candidates will affirm their desire to be received into full communion with the Church, and make a Profession of Faith. Together with those Catholics completing their initiation, they will receive Confirmation and their First Eucharist.

What Happens Next: Mystagogy

Christian Initiation continues through the Easter season for the newly baptized, during the period of *Mystagogy*. During this season, the *neophytes* (“new shoots,” the newly initiated) gather to deepen their grasp of the great Paschal Mystery into which they have just been incorporated.

Sometimes there are events, or trips, or other occasions in the wider Church. These new Christians who have received the Body of Christ have indeed become part of the Body of Christ through their Baptism. The Church uses *Mystagogy* to help the neophytes understand and live out their new lives as part of the Body of Christ.

Throughout their time with OCI, Participants will be expected to:

- **Become an active member of our parish.** Registration into SJN should take place as soon as possible if the Inquirer is not already part of a registered family.
- **Attend regular Sunday Mass,** as it is the most fundamental way to come to know what it means to be Catholic. That’s why our main sessions are on Sundays – to help Participants acquire the habit of *being at church* on the Day of the Lord.
- **Attend all sessions and Rites as scheduled.** If a situation occurs where absences result, the Director and the individual participant/Sponsor will need to evaluate what is happening, and what will need to be done. *Prospective Sponsors should consider this obligation carefully before making the commitment for the duration of OCI.*
- **Attend all Retreats and Days of Reflection,** when they are offered.

Once they are assigned a Candidate or Catechumen, Sponsors will be expected to attend an Orientation and assist the OCI Team as needed throughout the year.

What is a Sponsor? Who can be one?

A *Sponsor* is a Catholic in good standing who is a companion to an Inquirer, Candidate or Catechumen over the time that formation takes place, attending sessions with the person they are accompanying. **A Sponsor must be a registered, active parishioner of St. John Neumann at least 17 years of age who has received all three Sacraments of Initiation**, so long as the Inquirer is not the Sponsor’s child. Baptized non-Catholics could be sponsored by their Catholic spouses. A Participant’s fiancé/e *may* be suitable as a Sponsor so long as the commitments to the OCI are met and *not* secondary to the details of preparing for a wedding.

Sponsors and participants form a tight, supportive group over time and the partnership becomes critical as time goes by. It is a considerable commitment to be sure, and not for everybody. Fitness to serve as a Sponsor is determined by the Director with the help of the Evangelization Team. (Members of the Team do not act as Sponsors, as their own responsibilities within OCI are different.)

2025 - 2026 OCI Session Schedule

Weekly *Lectionary* readings, Session Topics, Events & Minor Rites

<p>September 6/7, 2025: 23rd Week of Ordinary Time (<i>Lectionary</i> Cycle C)</p> <p>129: Wis 9:13-18b Phlm 9-10, 12-17 Luke 14: 25-33</p>	<p>PRECATECHUMENATE SESSIONS BEGIN</p> <p><i>Sycamore: The Search for Happiness</i> (YOUCAT: Foreword; Paragraphs #279 - #290)</p> <p>The impossibility of sitting still. What is happiness? How to press the “pause” button.</p> <p><i>Handout: YOUCAT</i></p>
<p>September 13/14: 24th OT (C)</p> <p>132: Exod 32:7-11, 13-14 1 Tim 1:12-17 Luke 15:1-32</p>	<p><i>Sycamore: The Existence of God</i> (YOUCAT: Paragraphs #3 - #6; #352 - #357)</p> <p>Why bother thinking about religion? Five reasons not to believe in God. Arguments for the existence of God.</p>
<p>September 20/21: 25th OT (C)</p> <p>135: Amos 8:4-7 1 Tim 2:1-8 Luke 16:1-13</p>	<p><i>Sycamore: A God who Speaks?</i> (YOUCAT: Paragraphs #7 - #10; #358; #71 - #85)</p> <p>The Hiddenness of God. When God broke the silence. Discovering the face of God.</p>
<p>September 27/28: 26th OT (C)</p> <p>138: Amos 6:1a, 4-7 1 Tim 6:11-16 Luke 16:19-31</p>	<p><i>Sycamore: Who is Jesus?</i> (YOUCAT: Paragraphs #86 - #112)</p> <p>He came to bring life to the world. The saving death of Jesus. The light of the Resurrection.</p>
<p>October 4/5: 27th OT (C)</p> <p>141: Hab 1:2-3; 2:2-4 2 Tim 1:6-8, 13-14 Luke 17:5-10</p>	<p><i>Sycamore: The Holy Spirit and the Church</i> (YOUCAT: Paragraphs #11 - #19)</p> <p>How the Holy Spirit can change your life. No one gets into heaven alone. Why we need signs, symbols and sacraments.</p>
<p>October 11/12: 28th OT (C)</p> <p>144: 2 Kgs 5:14-17 2 Tim 2:8-13 Luke 17:11-19</p>	<p>Rites of Entrance & Welcome, 11:00 a.m. Mass</p> <p>CATECHUMENATE SESSIONS BEGIN</p> <p><i>Sycamore: The Bible</i> (YOUCAT: Paragraphs #11 - #19)</p> <p>What is the Bible? Can we trust the Bible? How the Bible can change your life.</p> <p><i>Handouts: YOUCAT; New American Bible, Revised Edition</i></p> <p>(N.B.: There is no OCI session on BWLS Long weekend.)</p>

October 25/26: 30th OT (C) 150: Sir 35:12-14, 16-18 2 Tim 4:6-8, 16-18 Luke 18:9-14	The 73 Books of the Bible <i>Handout: The Whole Bible at a Glance (Catholic Update)</i>
November 2: All Souls' Day 668: Wis 3:1-9 Rom 5:5-11 John 6:37-40	Church History, Part I: Jesus to AD 1500 <i>Handout: Peak Moments in Church History (Catholic Update)</i>
November 9: The Lateran Basilica 671: Ez 47:1-2, 8-9, 12 1 Cor 3:9c-11 John 2:13-22	Church History, Part II: AD 1500 to 1960
November 15/16: 33rd OT (C) 159: Mal 3:19-20a 2 Thess 3:7-12 Luke 21:5-19	Church History, Part III: 1960 to Right Now <i>Handout: Vatican II (Catholic Update)</i>
November 22/23: CHRIST THE KING 162: 2 Sam 5:1-3 Col 1:12-20 Luke 23:35-43	What is the "Church Year?" <i>Handout: The Year of Grace Calendar 2026</i> (N.B.: There is no session next week due to Thanksgiving.)
December 6/7: Week II of Advent (Lectionary Cycle A) 4: Isa 11:1-10 Rom 15:4-9 Matt 3:1-12	Sycamore: <i>The Power of Prayer</i> (YOUCAT: Paragraphs #469 - #489) What is prayer? Does prayer make a difference? How to pray.
December 13/14: III Advent (A) 9: Zep 3:14-18a Phil 4:4-7 Luke 3:10-18	Sycamore: <i>How to Pray</i> (YOUCAT: Paragraphs #490 - #527) The amazing adventure of prayer. Four basic ways of praying. Prayers and devotions to help you through the day. (N.B.: There are no OCI sessions during the Christmas Break.)

January 3/4, 2025: EPIPHANY (A) 20: Is 60:1-6 Eph 3:2-3a, 5-6 Matt 2:1-12	The Sacraments: Up Close and Personal (Featuring a tour of the Church)
January 10/11: BAPTISM OF THE LORD (A) 21: Is 40:1-5 1 Cor 12:4-11 John 2:1-11	Anointing of the Catechumens - 11:00 a.m. Mass Sacraments & Initiation
January 18/19: 2nd OT (A) 66: Is 62:1-5 Titus 2:11-14, 3:4-7 Luke 3:15-16, 21-22	Sycamore: <i>The Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation</i> (YOUCAT: Paragraphs #193 - #207; #310 - #311) The power of the sacraments and the liturgy. How Baptism can change your life. Confirmation and the gift of the Holy Spirit.
January 25/26: 3rd OT (A) 69: Neh 8:2-4a, 5-6, 8-10 1 Cor 12:12-30 Luke 1:1-4, 4:14-21	Sycamore: <i>The Holy Eucharist</i> (YOUCAT: Paragraphs #208 - #223) The meaning of the Mass. The Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.
January 31/ February 1: 4th OT (A) 70: Zep 2:3; 3:12-13 1 Cor 1:26-31 Matt 5:1-12a	Sycamore: <i>The Christian Vocations</i> (YOUCAT: Paragraphs #145; #248 - #271; #400 - #425) The meaning of vocation. Marriage and family life. Love, sexuality, chastity, and the gift of children. Ordination and consecrated life.
February 8/9: 5th OT (A) 75: Is 6:1-2a, 3-8 1 Cor 15:1-11 Luke 5:1-11	Sycamore: <i>Creation, Fall, Salvation</i> (YOUCAT: Paragraphs #41 - 70) The goodness of creation. Suffering and sin. The gift of salvation.
February 14/15: 6th OT (A) 76: Sir 15:16-21 1 Cor 2:6-10 Matt 5:17-37	Sycamore: <i>Forgiveness, Healing and Mission</i> (YOUCAT: Paragraphs #312 - 320; #224 - #247) Forgiveness and the Sacrament of Confession. Healing and the Sacrament of the Sick. Christian mission and the call to share our faith.

February 18: Ash Wednesday 219: Joel 2:12-18 2 Cor 5:20-6:2 Matt 6:1-6, 16-18	PURIFICATION & ENLIGHTENMENT (LENT) SESSIONS BEGIN <i>6:30 p.m. Mass: With distribution of Ashes</i>
Saturday, February 21 <i>Rite of Sending of Catechumens & Call to Continuing Conversion of Candidates:</i> 4:00 p.m. Mass	
February 21/22: I Lent (A) 22: Gen 2:7-9, 3:1-7 Rom 5:12-19 Matt 4:1-11	<i>Diocesan Rite of Election:</i> <i>3:00 p.m., St. Paul the Apostle Church, Westerville</i>
February 28/ March 1: II Lent (A) 25: Gen 12:1-4a 2 Tim 1:8b-10 Matt 17:1-9	<i>Sycamore: Finding True Freedom</i> (YOUCAT: Paragraphs #291 - #298; #343 - 351) Is there such a thing as right and wrong? Where can we find moral guidance? How do you discover your true identity?
March 7/8: III Lent (A) 28: Ex 17:3-7 Rom 5:1-2, 5-8 John 4:5-42	THE FIRST SCRUTINY & PRESENTATION OF THE CREED 9:00 a.m. Mass <i>Sycamore: The Social Teaching of the Church</i> (YOUCAT: Paragraphs #367 - #399; #426 - 461) The dignity of the human person and the right to life. Christian teaching about family, society, and citizenship. Speaking the truth and following conscience.
Wednesday, March 11	PARISH LENTEN RECONCILIATION SERVICE, 6:30 p.m. in Church
March 14/15: IV Lent (A) 31: 1 Sam 16:1, 6-7, 10-13a Eph 5:8-14 John 9:1-41	THE SECOND SCRUTINY 11:00 a.m. Mass Four Marks of the Church: One, Holy <i>Handouts:</i> Tradition in the Catholic Church (<i>Catholic Update</i>) What Does it Mean to be "Church?" (<i>Catholic Update</i>) Nine Things That Make Us Catholic (<i>Catholic Update</i>)

March 21/22: V Lent (A) 34: Ezek 37:12-14 Rom 8:8-11 John 11:1-45	THE THIRD SCRUTINY & PRESENTATION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER: 5:00 p.m. Mass Four Marks of the Church: Catholic, Apostolic <i>Handouts:</i> The Roman Curia – How the Church is Run (<i>Catholic Update</i>) Infallibility and Church Authority (<i>Catholic Update</i>)
March 28/29: PALM SUNDAY 38: Luke 21:1-11 (w/Procession) Is 50:4-7 Phil 2:6-11 Matt 26:14-27:66	The Four Last Things (YOUCAT: Paragraphs #146 - #165) Death, judgment, and our longing for eternal life. Holiness, the saints, and our hope for Heaven. What Catholics believe about the Blessed Virgin Mary.



THE PASCHAL TRIDUUM

Holy Thursday: *Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper* - April 2, 7:00 p.m.
(Volunteers for Foot Washing should arrive by 6:30 p.m.)

Good Friday: *Service of the Lord's Passion* - April 3, 3:00 p.m.

Holy Saturday: *Rehearsal for Easter Vigil* - April 4, 10:00 a.m.
Recitation of the Creed, in Church immediately following rehearsal

VIGIL OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD

Saturday, April 4, 9:00 p.m.

The Elect should arrive with their Godparents *no later than* 8:00 p.m.
A reception will immediately follow the Easter Vigil.

MYSTAGOGY SESSIONS

after the 9:00 a.m. Mass

Neophytes – newly baptized Catholics – will gather with Candidates and Adult *Confirmandi* to discuss their experiences through the Catechumenate, Purification & Enlightenment and the Vigil itself, and explore the move into a life of intentional missionary discipleship.

April 18/19: THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER (A) 46: Acts 2:14, 22-33 1 Peter 1:17-21 Luke 24:13-35	Sycamore: <i>The Community of the Church</i> (YOUCAT: Paragraphs #129 - #144) Why do we need the Church? The special place of the Catholic Church. Being Catholic today.
April 25/26: FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER (A) 49: Acts 2:14a, 36-41 1 Peter 2:20b-25 John 10:1-10	Sycamore: <i>The Meaning of Love</i> (YOUCAT: Paragraphs #321 - #342, #359 - 366) What is love? How to love your neighbor. Knowing the love of God.
May 9/10: SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER 55: Acts 8:5-8, 14-17 1 Peter 3:15-18 John 14:15-21	Sycamore: <i>Mary & the Hope of Heaven</i> (YOUCAT: Paragraphs #146 - #165) Death, judgment, and our longing for eternal life. Holiness, the saints, and our hope for Heaven. What Catholics believe about the Blessed Virgin Mary.
May 16/17: THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD 58: Acts 1:1-11 Eph 1:17-23 Matt 28:16-20	Devotions and Practices (At Marian Grotto, weather permitting) What is the Rosary? What is a Chaplet? What is the Liturgy of the Hours? What are “sacramentals,” and how can we use them?

VIGIL OF THE SOLEMNITY OF PENTECOST

Saturday, May 23, 4:00 p.m. Mass

Candidates, Adult *Confirmandi* and their Sponsors should arrive at the Church *no later than* 3:00 p.m. Receptions into the Church and Confirmations will take place after the Homily.

A reception will immediately follow the Mass.