



Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)

Marriage and the Process of Initiation

It is our Catholic understanding that marriage is a lifelong relationship between a man and a woman, a relationship that is at once permanent and exclusive. This relationship is brought about by the gift of the spouses to each other and is ordered to the mutual well-being of the spouses, as well as to the possible gift of children and their upbringing.

Catholics believe that marriage is a natural human institution, inscribed into the Natural Law by God. We respect that law. As such, this permanent and exclusive bond is considered binding, dissoluble normally only by death.

Catholics also believe that when marriage is entered into by two Christians, this natural relationship is raised to be a sacrament of Christ's love for the Church. The spouses become sacraments of Christ to each other, and their relationship a sacrament of Christ to the world. A marriage that exists between two non-Catholic Christians is considered a real marriage, which is also sacramental and lifelong.

This sacrament of Christ's faithful, sacrificial love is so important a sign for the mission of the Church, that Catholic Christians are required to be married before a witness of the Church (usually a Priest) in order to enter into a valid marriage. This is usually referred to as "the canonical form" of marriage, and Catholics are obliged to observe it.

THE FOUNDATION FOR THE PAULINE PRINCIPLE

To the rest I say – I and not the Lord – that if any believer has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce him. And if any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is made holy through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy through her husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so; in such a case the brother or sister is not bound. It is to peace that God has called you. Wife, for all you know, you might save your husband. Husband, for all you know, you might save your wife.

1 Cor 7: 12 - 16



Given the implications of a Catholic understanding of marriage, which is quite different from that of society or other Christian communities, there may arise questions that need to be looked at as part of becoming a Catholic Christian. It would be important, therefore, to know the marital situation of the inquirer. In order to help the inquirer to address any of these concerns, it is imperative that he or she meet with the Pastor as early as possible.

It is important to note that the past experience of a potential candidate might be a very delicate matter. Those who are open and looking for full communion with the Catholic Church should be assisted in a very gentle, clear, professional, merciful and pastoral way. For this reason the Pastor is to be consulted to discuss all matters concerning marriage. The Pastor will then assess the best path to be taken by the inquirer.

In order to assist the Pastor, the Archdiocese has developed special instructions and registration forms for the RCIA process. These policies and procedures should be consulted and completed during the Inquiry Period.¹ Included in these forms is a supplemental marriage document, which needs to be filled out before the Rite of Acceptance or the Rite of Welcoming.

¹ See Policies No. 749, 612A, 612D

https://caedm.ca/Portals/0/documents/policies/749_PreviousMarriagesAndRCIA030Jun10.pdf?ver=2017-06-19-093438-513
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