

COMING INTO FULL COMMUNION

A Catholic preparation book for baptised Christians

One Lord, one faith, one baptism.

My name: _____

Christian tradition of Baptism: _____

Sponsor: _____

Reception date: _____

St Mary's | St John Bosco | St Edward's Parish

Candidate preparation parish edition | 2026

Your Baptism is already real

This book is for a Christian who has already been validly baptised outside the Catholic Church and now freely seeks reception into its full communion. You are a candidate for reception, not a catechumen awaiting Baptism. A valid Baptism is never repeated.

The Church receives with gratitude the Christian faith, Scripture, prayer, moral formation and witness that you may already have received. Coming into full communion does not mean pretending that God was absent from your earlier Christian life. It means embracing the fullness of Catholic faith and visible communion to which you now believe Christ is calling you.

IMPORTANT If you were baptised in an Orthodox or other Eastern Church, were previously Catholic, are unsure whether your Baptism was valid, or have a previous marriage, tell the priest at the very beginning. These facts can change the proper canonical and sacramental route.

How to use this book

There are twelve short conversations. Each contains one central truth, concise teaching, one question for honest discussion, five essential questions and answers, a prayer and one practical step. A normal conversation should take about 20-30 minutes. Use the book with a sponsor, parish mentor or priest, or read a section beforehand and discuss it afterwards.

This is a doctrinal spine, not a stopwatch. A candidate with years of serious Christian formation may move more quickly; someone encountering Catholic teaching for the first time may need longer. Repeat, combine or expand conversations as needed. Readiness matters more than a calendar date.

Attend Sunday Mass faithfully during preparation and take part as fully as you can, but do not receive Holy Communion until you have been received into full communion. Bring questions rather than hiding them. Difficulty understanding a teaching is not the same as rejecting it; the important thing is to seek the truth honestly and not make a profession of faith that you cannot sincerely mean.

SIMPLE RULE Come to Mass. Read the next conversation. Talk honestly. Ask the question you actually have. Pray. Take one concrete step. Let the priest judge readiness and deal with canonical questions.

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The Call to Full Communion

REMEMBER Your valid Baptism already joins you to Christ. Reception into full communion is not another Baptism; it brings an already baptised Christian into full visible communion with the Catholic Church in faith, sacramental life and ecclesial communion.

By Baptism you have already been incorporated into Christ and share a real bond with all who are baptised in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Catholic Church therefore does not speak as though your Christian life begins from nothing on the day of reception.

Full communion means more than joining an organisation. It means freely professing the Catholic faith, sharing the sacramental life of the Catholic Church, and accepting communion with the pastors Christ has given the Church. The Eucharist will become the visible centre of that communion.

You need not despise the Christian community from which you come. Give thanks for whatever was true, holy and fruitful there. At the same time, reception asks for a real decision: you are not merely adding Catholic devotions to your existing identity; you are asking to live as a Catholic Christian.

TALK ABOUT IT When you think about becoming Catholic, what are you moving towards, not merely what are you leaving behind?

THE ESSENTIALS

- 1. Am I being baptised again?** No. A valid Christian Baptism is received only once.
- 2. What is reception into full communion?** The Church receives an already baptised Christian into full visible communion in Catholic faith and sacramental life.
- 3. Does the Catholic Church recognise anything good in other Christian communities?** Yes. Baptism creates a real Christian bond, and many elements of sanctification and truth are found beyond the Catholic Church's visible boundaries.
- 4. Must the decision be free?** Yes. No one should be pressured into a profession of Catholic faith.
- 5. What is the goal of preparation?** Not simply information, but a free and informed Catholic profession of faith and a life of communion with Christ and his Church.

PRAYER Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for every grace by which you have led me to this point. Purify my motives, deepen my faith and guide me into the unity you desire for your Church. Amen.

THIS WEEK Write down three graces you have received in your Christian life so far and three reasons you now feel drawn towards full communion with the Catholic Church.

Scripture, Tradition and the Magisterium

REMEMBER God's one revelation is handed on in Sacred Scripture and Apostolic Tradition. The Church's Magisterium - the Pope and the bishops in communion with him - serves the Word of God by authentically interpreting what has been handed down.

Catholics do not place "human tradition" above the Bible. Sacred Scripture is inspired by God and is the written Word of God. Apostolic Tradition is the living transmission of what Christ entrusted to the apostles and what the Holy Spirit taught the apostolic Church.

Scripture and Tradition come from the same divine source and belong together. The New Testament itself emerged within the apostolic Church, and the Church discerned the canon of Scripture within that living Tradition.

The Magisterium is not a third source of revelation and is not above the Word of God. Its task is to guard, explain, and faithfully interpret the deposit of faith. This is why Catholic doctrine is more than the private conclusion of an individual Bible reader, however sincere.

TALK ABOUT IT When faithful Christians read the same biblical text in different ways, how do you think Christ intended the Church to remain one in truth?

THE ESSENTIALS

- 1. Is the Bible the Word of God?** Yes. Sacred Scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit and truly teaches what God wills for our salvation.
- 2. What is Apostolic Tradition?** The living transmission in the Church of the faith entrusted by Christ and the Holy Spirit to the apostles.
- 3. Are Scripture and Tradition rivals?** No. They are distinct but inseparably connected modes by which the one apostolic faith is handed on.
- 4. What is the Magisterium?** The Church's living teaching office, exercised by the Pope and bishops in communion with him.
- 5. Does the Magisterium invent new revelation?** No. It serves, guards and authentically interprets the revelation already entrusted to the Church.

PRAYER Holy Spirit, who inspired the Scriptures and guides the Church, give me humility before your Word and wisdom to receive the apostolic faith faithfully. Amen.

THIS WEEK Read Acts 2:42, 2 Thessalonians 2:15, 1 Timothy 3:15 and 2 Peter 1:20-21. Note one question these passages raise for you about authority and tradition.

The Creed and the Mystery of Salvation

REMEMBER The Catholic faith is the apostolic faith: one God in three divine Persons; creation by God; humanity wounded by sin; the Incarnation, death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ; the gift of the Holy Spirit; the resurrection of the dead and eternal life.

Catholic faith begins with God, not with ourselves. The one God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit: three divine Persons, one divine nature. God freely creates everything that exists and creates the human person in his image, with reason, freedom and a calling to communion with him.

Humanity is wounded by original sin and every person needs redemption. The eternal Son truly became man without ceasing to be God. Jesus Christ is one divine Person with a true human nature. By his Cross and Resurrection he conquers sin and death and reconciles us to the Father. The Holy Spirit gives life to the Church and sanctifies us. History is moving towards Christ's return, the resurrection of the body, judgment and the fulfilment of God's kingdom. Heaven is eternal communion with God; hell is definitive self-exclusion from that communion by dying unrepentant in grave sin.

TALK ABOUT IT Which line of the Creed feels most familiar to you, and which one do you most want to understand more deeply?

THE ESSENTIALS

- 1. How many Gods do Christians believe in?** One God in three divine Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- 2. Who is Jesus Christ?** The eternal Son of God made man, true God and true man, one divine Person.
- 3. Why do we need salvation?** Because humanity is wounded by sin and cannot restore communion with God by its own power.
- 4. What saves us?** The grace of God won for us by the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ and received in faith.
- 5. What do Christians hope for?** Christ's return, the resurrection of the body, judgment and eternal life with God.

PRAYER Father, Son and Holy Spirit, deepen in me the faith I received at Baptism. Let the Creed become not only words I say but the truth by which I live. Amen.

THIS WEEK Pray the Apostles' Creed slowly on three days this week. Mark any phrase you could not yet explain in your own words and bring it to your next conversation.

The Church Christ Founded

REMEMBER Christ founded one Church and gave it an apostolic and visible structure. The Church is one, holy, catholic and apostolic, and is governed in communion by the successor of Peter and the bishops who succeed the apostles.

The Church is not merely a voluntary association of people with similar beliefs. She is the People of God, the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit. Christ is her Head, and he continues his saving work through her preaching, sacraments, charity and mission.

The Church is one because her source is the Trinity and her faith and sacramental life are one; holy because Christ sanctifies her even though her members are sinners; catholic because Christ is fully present in her and she is sent to all peoples; apostolic because she is founded on the apostles and continues in their teaching and succession.

The Bishop of Rome, the Pope, succeeds St Peter in a unique ministry of unity. Bishops succeed the apostles and teach and govern their local Churches in communion with him. Papal infallibility does not mean that every papal opinion is infallible or that a Pope cannot sin; it is a specific gift protecting the Church from error when the conditions laid down by the Church are fulfilled.

TALK ABOUT IT Why might Christ's Church need visible unity and a visible teaching office, rather than only a shared invisible faith?

THE ESSENTIALS

- 1. What are the four marks of the Church?** One, holy, catholic and apostolic.
- 2. Who is the Head of the Church?** Jesus Christ.
- 3. What is the Pope's role?** As Bishop of Rome and successor of St Peter, he serves the unity and faith of the universal Church.
- 4. What is a bishop?** A successor of the apostles who teaches, sanctifies and governs a local Church in communion with the Pope.
- 5. Does holiness mean every Catholic is holy?** No. The Church is holy because Christ is holy and gives her holy doctrine, sacraments and grace, while her members still need conversion.

PRAYER Lord Jesus, you prayed that your disciples might be one. Give me love for your whole Church, fidelity to the apostolic faith and humility towards those you have appointed to shepherd your people. Amen.

THIS WEEK At Sunday Mass, notice the references to the Pope, the diocesan bishop and the universal Church. Ask yourself how the local parish is joined to a Church larger than itself.

Mary, the Saints and the Communion of Saints

REMEMBER Catholics adore God alone. We honour the saints because Christ has made them holy, ask their prayers because the Church is one in Christ, and honour Mary uniquely because she is the Mother of God and the foremost disciple of her Son.

Catholic devotion never places Mary or the saints alongside God as rival powers. Adoration belongs to God alone. Asking a saint to pray for us is an extension of the same communion in Christ by which Christians on earth pray for one another.

Mary's privileges are about Christ and grace: she is truly Mother of God because the one she bore is the divine Son; she was preserved from original sin by Christ's grace, remained ever Virgin, and at the end of her earthly life was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory. She remains a creature entirely dependent on God.

The communion of saints includes the faithful on earth, those being purified after death, and the saints in heaven. Purgatory is not a second chance after rejecting God; it is the final purification of those who die in God's friendship but still need purification. For this reason Catholics pray for the dead.

TALK ABOUT IT Which Catholic belief or practice concerning Mary, the saints or prayer for the dead has been hardest for you, and what exactly is the difficulty?

THE ESSENTIALS

- 1. Do Catholics worship Mary or the saints?** No. Adoration is given to God alone; saints are honoured as members of Christ and asked to intercede.
- 2. Why call Mary Mother of God?** Because Jesus Christ, whom she bore according to his human nature, is one divine Person who is truly God.
- 3. Why ask saints to pray for us?** Because all who live in Christ belong to one communion, and the saints in heaven remain alive in him.
- 4. What is purgatory?** The final purification of those who die in God's grace and friendship but are not yet perfectly purified.
- 5. Why pray for the dead?** Because the Church's communion in Christ includes those who have died, and our prayers can assist those undergoing purification.

PRAYER Mary, Mother of the Church, and all you saints of God, pray that I may belong wholly to Jesus Christ, love his Church faithfully and persevere to eternal life. Amen.

THIS WEEK Choose one saint whose life interests you and read a short reliable account of that person. Ask what their life reveals about following Christ rather than merely collecting facts about them.

Grace and the Seven Sacraments

REMEMBER Christ gives grace through seven sacraments entrusted to the Church: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders and Matrimony. Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist form one Christian initiation.

A sacrament is more than a religious symbol expressing what we already feel. It is an effective sign of grace instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church. God acts through the sacramental sign, while fruitful reception calls for faith and proper disposition.

Baptism gives new birth in Christ, forgives sin and leaves a permanent sacramental character. Therefore a valid Baptism is never repeated. The parish will verify your Baptism before reception. Confirmation strengthens baptismal grace by the gift of the Holy Spirit and also leaves an indelible character. In the Latin Church, a priest who receives a baptised Christian into full communion has by law the faculty to confirm that person when Confirmation is needed. If you were chrismated in an Eastern Church whose sacraments the Catholic Church recognises, you are not confirmed again; tell the priest at the outset.

TALK ABOUT IT What changes when you say a sacrament is something God does, rather than only something the worshipper does?

THE ESSENTIALS

- 1. How many sacraments are there?** Seven: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders and Matrimony.
- 2. What do sacraments do?** They signify and truly communicate the grace Christ gives through his Church.
- 3. Can Baptism be repeated?** No. A valid Baptism leaves an indelible spiritual character.
- 4. Which sacraments complete Christian initiation?** Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist.
- 5. Will every candidate be confirmed at reception?** A candidate who has not already received valid Confirmation normally receives it; the priest determines this from the person's sacramental history.

PRAYER Lord Jesus, thank you for the sacramental life of your Church. Make me receptive to your grace and teach me to receive your gifts with faith, reverence and gratitude. Amen.

THIS WEEK Learn the names of the seven sacraments and group them as initiation, healing, and service of communion/mission. Note which ones you have already validly received.

The Eucharist and the Holy Mass

REMEMBER In the Eucharist Jesus Christ is truly, really and substantially present - Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity. The Mass sacramentally makes present his one sacrifice of Calvary, and Holy Communion is both union with Christ and a visible sign of full communion with his Church.

At the consecration the whole substance of bread and wine becomes the Body and Blood of Christ, while the appearances remain. The Church calls this change transubstantiation. Christ is wholly present under either species and remains present as long as the Eucharistic species remain.

The Mass is not a new crucifixion and Christ does not die again. His one sacrifice, offered once on Calvary, is made sacramentally present so that the Church can unite her worship and self-offering to his perfect sacrifice. The Eucharist is therefore sacrifice, memorial, presence and sacred banquet.

Holy Communion does not express only a private relationship with Jesus. It also manifests communion with the Church's faith, sacraments and pastors. This is why a candidate normally waits until reception into full communion before receiving the Eucharist. At reception, sharing the Eucharist with the Catholic community is the high point of the rite.

TALK ABOUT IT If Holy Communion expresses both union with Christ and union with his Church, how does that change the way you understand waiting to receive?

THE ESSENTIALS

- 1. Is the Eucharist merely a symbol of Jesus?** No. Jesus Christ is truly, really and substantially present.
- 2. What is transubstantiation?** The whole substance of bread and wine is changed into Christ's Body and Blood while the appearances of bread and wine remain.
- 3. Does Christ die again at every Mass?** No. His one sacrifice is made sacramentally present; it is not repeated.
- 4. Why is Sunday Mass central to Catholic life?** Because the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Church's life and Sunday is the Lord's Day.
- 5. Why is Communion linked with full communion in the Church?** Because receiving the one Body of Christ also expresses visible unity in Catholic faith and ecclesial communion.

PRAYER Jesus, Bread of Life, deepen my faith in your Real Presence. Prepare me to receive you worthily and to offer my whole life with your one perfect sacrifice. Amen.

THIS WEEK At Mass this Sunday, pay particular attention to the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Afterwards write one sentence each about sacrifice, presence, Communion, and thanksgiving.

Conversion and the Sacrament of Penance

REMEMBER Christ continues his work of forgiveness after Baptism through the Sacrament of Penance. Candidates for full communion are normally prepared to celebrate Confession before reception so that they approach Confirmation and the Eucharist in a state of grace.

Baptism forgives all sin committed before Baptism. After Baptism, Christians still struggle with sin and need continuing conversion. Mortal sin involves grave matter, sufficient knowledge and deliberate consent; venial sin wounds charity without destroying the life of grace.

In Confession we approach Christ through the ministry he entrusted to the Church. The penitent examines conscience, is contrite, confesses sins honestly, intends to turn from sin, receives absolution and performs the penance given. The priest is bound by the sacramental seal.

First Confession need not be frightening or perfect. You should prepare honestly, especially for serious sins committed after Baptism, and tell the priest that this is your first Catholic Confession. He will guide you. Do not turn an examination of conscience into anxious hunting for faults you cannot remember.

TALK ABOUT IT What might be spiritually different between privately telling God you are sorry and also bringing your sins sacramentally to Christ through the priest?

THE ESSENTIALS

- 1. Why do Catholics confess to a priest?** Because Christ entrusted to his Church a sacramental ministry of reconciliation and forgiveness.
- 2. What is mortal sin?** A grave sin committed with sufficient knowledge and deliberate consent.
- 3. What is contrition?** Sorrow for sin together with a real intention to turn away from it.
- 4. What does absolution do?** Christ forgives sins through the ministry of the priest and reconciles the penitent with the Church.
- 5. Should a candidate go to Confession before reception?** Normally yes; the priest will prepare and arrange the sacrament as part of immediate preparation.

PRAYER Merciful Father, give me honest sorrow for sin, confidence in your mercy and courage to make a good Confession. Create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me. Amen.

THIS WEEK Read Appendix B and begin a peaceful examination of conscience. Arrange the time for Confession with the priest rather than leaving it until the last moment.

The Moral Life: Freedom, Conscience and Virtue

REMEMBER The Christian moral life is our response to God's grace. We are saved by grace, not by earning God's love; the grace that justifies us also transforms us so that faith becomes active in love, obedience and good works.

Catholic morality is not a way of purchasing salvation. God acts first. Even our good response is sustained by grace. Yet grace does not destroy freedom: it heals and elevates it, calling us to cooperate with God and become holy.

The Beatitudes reveal the character of life in Christ, and the Ten Commandments give enduring moral shape to love of God and neighbour. Virtues form stable habits of choosing the good. The theological virtues are faith, hope and charity; the cardinal virtues are prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance.

Conscience is not simply a private feeling that makes right and wrong true for me. It is the judgement of reason about a concrete act and must be formed by truth, Scripture, prayer and the teaching of the Church. A sincere conscience deserves respect, but sincerity alone does not make an objectively wrong action right.

TALK ABOUT IT What is the difference between “following my conscience” and “forming my conscience”?

THE ESSENTIALS

- 1. Are Catholics saved by good works instead of grace?** No. Salvation is God's grace; good works are the fruit of grace and living faith, not an independent way of earning salvation.
- 2. Why do the commandments still matter?** They express the moral law and teach concrete love of God and neighbour.
- 3. What are the theological virtues?** Faith, hope and charity.
- 4. What is conscience?** A judgement of reason by which we recognise the moral quality of a concrete act.
- 5. Must conscience be formed?** Yes. Christians have a duty to seek truth and form conscience by God's Word and the Church's moral teaching.

PRAYER Lord Jesus, form my conscience in truth. Free me from both self-righteousness and moral confusion, and teach me the obedience of faith that bears fruit in love. Amen.

THIS WEEK Choose one Beatitude and one Commandment. Ask how each would concretely change one ordinary decision in your life this week.

The Moral Life: Love in Concrete Life

REMEMBER Catholic moral teaching protects the dignity of the human person and the truth of love. Christian discipleship includes reverence for human life, chastity and the dignity of marriage, honesty, justice, care for the poor, forgiveness and responsibility for the common good.

Every human person is made in God's image and must never be reduced to an object or a problem. Human life is sacred and deserves protection from conception until natural death. Care for the sick, disabled, poor, unborn, elderly, stranger and vulnerable belongs to Christian love.

Chastity integrates sexuality within the dignity of the person. Sexual union belongs within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman and is ordered both to the good of the spouses and to openness to life. Catholic morality calls every person, married or unmarried, to self-mastery, fidelity and purity of heart.

The moral life also includes work, money, truth, reputation, property, social justice and the use of power. Christians must reject lying, exploitation, racism, revenge and indifference to suffering. Charity goes beyond bare justice: it seeks the true good of neighbour, including enemies.

TALK ABOUT IT Which Catholic moral teaching do you find most challenging to understand or live, and can you name the underlying good the Church believes it is protecting?

THE ESSENTIALS

- 1. Why does the Church defend human life so strongly?** Because every human person has God-given dignity and may never be treated as disposable.
- 2. What is chastity?** The virtue that integrates sexuality within the person and directs it according to one's state of life.
- 3. What is Christian marriage?** A lifelong and exclusive covenant between a man and a woman, ordered to their good and to the gift and education of children.
- 4. Does Catholic morality concern only sexual questions?** No. It also governs truth, money, work, justice, violence, care for the poor, social responsibility and every area of human action.
- 5. What is the highest moral virtue?** Charity: the supernatural love of God above all things and of neighbour for God's sake.

PRAYER God of truth and mercy, teach me to love what is truly good. Give me courage where your teaching is demanding and charity towards every person, especially those who are vulnerable or difficult to love. Amen.

THIS WEEK Bring one genuine moral question to the priest or mentor. Do not choose a question merely to "complete the exercise"; choose the one that actually matters for your life.

Prayer and the Ordinary Catholic Life

REMEMBER Catholic life is sustained by Sunday Eucharist, daily prayer, Scripture, the sacraments, the liturgical year, works of charity and ongoing conversion. Devotions and sacramentals support this life but never replace the liturgy or the sacraments.

Prayer is a living relationship with the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit. Catholics pray with Scripture, the Psalms, the Lord's Prayer, silent meditation, intercession, thanksgiving and the prayer of the Church. The goal is not to multiply techniques but to remain with God faithfully.

The Church's liturgical year forms us through Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter and Ordinary Time, with Sundays and feasts drawing us repeatedly into the mysteries of Christ. Catholics keep Sunday and holy days of obligation by participating in Mass unless excused by a serious reason.

Sacramentals and devotions - holy water, blessings, the Rosary, Stations of the Cross, Eucharistic adoration, novenas and other approved practices - dispose us to grace and extend the Church's prayer into daily life. They are optional in varying degrees and should lead us to Christ, not become superstition.

TALK ABOUT IT What simple rhythm of prayer and Sunday worship is realistic enough that you could still be living it five years from now?

THE ESSENTIALS

1. **What is the centre of weekly Catholic life?** Sunday Mass.
2. **How should Catholics pray?** Faithfully and in many forms: liturgical prayer, Scripture, vocal prayer, meditation, intercession, thanksgiving and silent prayer.
3. **What are sacramentals?** Sacred signs instituted by the Church that prepare us to receive grace and sanctify ordinary circumstances of life.
4. **Must every Catholic practise every devotion?** No. Approved devotions are helps to holiness; the sacramental and liturgical life of the Church remains primary.
5. **Does becoming Catholic end formation?** No. Every Catholic remains a disciple who must continue learning, praying, converting and serving.

PRAYER Father, teach me to pray. Make Sunday worship the anchor of my life, your Word my daily light, and the ordinary habits of Catholic life a path of steady holiness. Amen.

THIS WEEK Choose a simple daily rule now: a morning offering or brief prayer, one Scripture reading, evening thanksgiving, and Sunday Mass. Keep it deliberately small enough to become permanent.

Profession, Reception, Confirmation and Eucharist

REMEMBER Reception into full communion is a free profession of the Catholic faith by an already baptised Christian. The candidate is received into the Church, ordinarily receives Confirmation if not already validly confirmed, and shares fully in the Eucharist.

The profession made at reception is short because you have already made the Christian profession of faith in Baptism. You now profess that you believe and accept the Catholic faith as the Church teaches it. The rite deliberately respects your baptismal identity rather than treating you as unbaptised.

If Confirmation is needed, the priest who receives you into full communion is normally able to confirm you in the same celebration. The Eucharist is the high point: for the first time you share sacramental Communion as one visibly united with the Catholic Church.

Reception is a beginning, not a graduation. You will still have questions, need Confession, need Sunday Mass and need the friendship of other Catholics. Full communion also calls for genuine ecumenical charity: becoming Catholic should deepen love for other Christians and prayer for the unity of all Christ's disciples, not produce contempt.

TALK ABOUT IT Can you sincerely say, without pretending or mentally adding exceptions, that you intend to live and believe as a Catholic Christian?

THE ESSENTIALS

- 1. What does the candidate profess?** The Catholic faith in its fullness, not merely a selection of teachings the candidate already prefers.
- 2. What if I still have questions?** Questions are normal. What matters is honest willingness to receive the Church's faith; deliberate rejection of a doctrine to be professed should be resolved before reception.
- 3. What normally follows the profession of faith?** The act of reception, Confirmation if needed, and full participation in the Eucharist.
- 4. Who decides whether I am ready?** The parish priest makes the pastoral judgement, following the approved rite, canon law and diocesan directions.
- 5. What happens after reception?** Ordinary Catholic life begins: Sunday Mass, prayer, Confession, continued formation, parish belonging, charity and mission.

PRAYER Lord Jesus Christ, you have led me by paths I did not always foresee. If this is your call, give me the faith to profess it without fear, the humility to keep learning and the charity to live in full communion with your Church. Amen.

THIS WEEK Read the readiness conversation in Appendix F. Write down any sentence you cannot yet say sincerely. Bring that point openly to the priest before setting or finalising a reception date.

Before You Begin: Baptism and Pastoral Check

Do this early. It prevents pastoral or canonical questions appearing only days before reception.

NOT A TEST These questions are not designed to catch you out. They help the priest identify the correct route and protect the sacraments from avoidable confusion.

Check	What to establish
Baptism	Where and when were you baptised? In which Church or ecclesial community? Do you have a certificate or other reliable record?
Previous Catholic status	Were you ever baptised or received as a Catholic, even as a baby? If yes, you are not a candidate for reception; a different pathway applies.
Confirmation / Chrismation	Have you ever been confirmed or chrismated? Give the denomination, place and approximate date.
Eastern Christian background	Were you baptised or chrismated in an Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox or other Eastern Church? Tell the priest before arranging the rite; your sacramental and canonical status may differ from that of a Western Protestant candidate.
Marriage history	Have you ever been married, civilly or religiously? Has your present spouse ever been married? Tell the priest about every prior bond, even if a divorce has occurred.
Current family situation	Is there anything in your present marital or family situation that you think may need pastoral or canonical attention? Ask early rather than assuming.
Sponsor	Choose, with parish guidance, a practising Catholic who can accompany you. If you are to be confirmed, the sponsor should meet the Church's requirements for a Confirmation sponsor.
Accessibility and learning needs	Tell the parish about disability, literacy, language, neurodiversity, shift work, caring responsibilities or other needs so that preparation can be adapted without lowering the substance of faith.

VALID BAPTISM If Baptism is clearly valid, it must not be repeated. If there is a genuine doubt, the priest investigates it according to the Church's law and liturgical books; the candidate should not try to solve the question alone.

Preparing for Your First Confession as a Catholic Candidate

Candidates for reception are normally prepared for the Sacrament of Penance before reception. This is possible precisely because you are already baptised. The aim is not to make you anxious about the past but to meet Christ's mercy sacramentally and approach Confirmation and the Eucharist in a state of grace.

A peaceful preparation

- Ask the Holy Spirit for honesty, light and trust in God's mercy.
- Consider your life since Baptism. Pay particular attention to serious sins you freely chose with sufficient knowledge.
- Do not invent certainty where memory is unclear. Confess what you honestly remember.
- For mortal sins, confess their kind and approximate number as far as reasonably possible. Venial sins may and should also be confessed.
- Tell the priest at the beginning: "I am preparing to be received into full communion, and this is my first Catholic Confession." He will guide you.
- Make a sincere act of contrition and a real purpose of amendment. A purpose of amendment is a genuine intention to change with God's help, not a prediction that you will never fail again.

BE AT PEACE The sacrament is a meeting with the mercy of Christ, not an oral examination. The priest may ask a brief question to understand what you mean, but Confession is not counselling and you do not need to tell unnecessary details.

A simple examination of conscience

- God: Have I knowingly rejected God, neglected prayer, treated holy things contemptuously, or placed superstition, occult practices, money, status or pleasure in God's place?
- Worship: Have I deliberately neglected the worship I knew I owed God, or treated Sunday as though God had no claim on my life?
- Family and authority: Have I failed gravely in duties towards parents, spouse, children, dependants, employers, employees or legitimate authority?
- Life and charity: Have I seriously harmed another person, nourished hatred, refused reasonable forgiveness, abused alcohol or drugs, or endangered myself or others?
- Chastity: Have I deliberately used another person sexually, been unfaithful, used pornography, or chosen sexual acts contrary to chastity?
- Justice: Have I stolen, cheated, exploited, withheld what was due, damaged property, or refused restitution where I could make it?
- Truth: Have I lied seriously, damaged another's reputation, betrayed confidences, or manipulated truth for selfish advantage?
- Desire: Have envy, greed, resentment or disordered desire become patterns that I knowingly feed rather than resist?

What happens in Confession

- 1. Begin:** Make the Sign of the Cross and tell the priest that you are a candidate for reception and this is your first Catholic Confession.
- 2. Confess:** State your sins honestly and simply. Ask if you are unsure whether something needs explaining.
- 3. Listen:** The priest may offer brief counsel and will give a penance.
- 4. Contrition:** Express sorrow for sin in an Act of Contrition or in your own suitable words.
- 5. Absolution:** The priest gives sacramental absolution. Listen and receive Christ's forgiveness with faith.
- 6. Penance:** Complete the penance as soon as reasonably possible and make restitution where justice requires it.

THE SEAL The sacramental seal is absolute. A priest may never disclose what you confess in the sacrament.

AFTER CONFESSION Do not keep reopening sins that were honestly confessed and absolved because you later remember an insignificant detail. If you later remember a mortal sin that you genuinely forgot, mention it at your next Confession without panic.

The Rite of Reception: Step by Step

This is a guide, not a script. The approved liturgical book and the priest govern the actual celebration.

Part	What it means
Before the celebration	The parish has established valid Baptism, freedom and readiness; Confession has normally been celebrated; Confirmation status has been clarified; the candidate and sponsor know where to stand.
Renewal of baptismal faith	Depending on the celebration, the candidate may join the community in renewing baptismal promises, recalling the Baptism already received.
Profession of Catholic faith	The candidate freely makes the profession required by the rite: "I believe and profess all that the holy Catholic Church believes, teaches, and proclaims to be revealed by God."
Act of reception	The priest formally receives the candidate into the full communion of the Catholic Church.
Confirmation, if needed	If the candidate has not already received valid Confirmation, Confirmation normally follows. The priest who receives the candidate has the faculty in law to confirm the person he receives.
Holy Eucharist	The celebration continues to the Eucharist. Sharing Holy Communion with the Catholic community is the sacramental high point of reception into full communion.
Afterwards	The newly received Catholic continues in Sunday Mass, prayer, Confession, formation, parish life and mission. Reception is the start of ordinary Catholic discipleship, not its completion.

EASTER OR ANOTHER SUITABLE TIME Reception may be celebrated at the Easter Vigil when pastorally appropriate, but already baptised candidates are not to be treated as though they were catechumens. The form and timing should respect the person's previous Christian life, readiness, family circumstances and local diocesan practice.

Things to Know Clearly

You do not need a theological examination. You should, however, be able to explain these truths honestly in ordinary words.

- 1. What is full communion?** Visible communion in the Catholic faith, sacramental life and ecclesiastical governance.
- 2. Is my valid Baptism repeated?** No. There is one Baptism, and its sacramental character is permanent.
- 3. What are Scripture and Tradition?** Two inseparably connected modes by which the one apostolic faith is handed on.
- 4. What is the Magisterium?** The living teaching office of the Pope and bishops in communion with him.
- 5. Who is God?** The one God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- 6. Who is Jesus Christ?** The eternal Son made man, true God and true man, who died and rose for our salvation.
- 7. What are the four marks of the Church?** One, holy, catholic and apostolic.
- 8. What is the Pope's role?** He is Bishop of Rome and successor of St Peter, serving the unity and faith of the universal Church.
- 9. How many sacraments are there?** Seven.
- 10. Which sacraments form Christian initiation?** Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist.
- 11. What is the Eucharist?** The sacrament in which Christ is truly present and gives us his Body and Blood.
- 12. What is transubstantiation?** The change of the whole substance of bread and wine into Christ's Body and Blood while the appearances remain.
- 13. What is the Mass?** The sacramental making-present of Christ's one sacrifice, the Church's supreme act of worship and the Eucharistic banquet.
- 14. What is Confession?** The sacrament in which Christ forgives post-baptismal sins through the ministry of the priest.
- 15. What is mortal sin?** Grave sin committed with sufficient knowledge and deliberate consent.
- 16. Do Catholics worship Mary and the saints?** No. God alone is adored; saints are honoured and asked to pray for us.
- 17. What is purgatory?** The final purification of those who die in God's grace but are not yet perfectly purified.
- 18. Are we saved by our own works?** No. Salvation is grace; living faith cooperates with grace and bears fruit in love and good works.
- 19. What is conscience?** The judgement of reason about the moral quality of a concrete act; it must be formed in truth.
- 20. What is the centre of ordinary weekly Catholic life?** Sunday Mass.
- 21. What does reception require of belief?** A sincere profession of the Catholic faith as a whole, not a private selection of preferred doctrines.
- 22. What if I have a question after reception?** Keep learning. Catholic faith seeks understanding throughout life.
- 23. What is the Christian mission?** To worship God, become holy, love neighbour and bear witness to Christ in the Church and the world.
- 24. What is the goal of Christian life?** Union with the Triune God in holiness and eternal life.

Common Questions from Other Christian Traditions

Do Catholics believe non-Catholic Christians are not Christians? No. Those validly baptised and believing in Christ are truly joined to him and share a real, though imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church.

Am I expected to say that everything in my former church was wrong? No. Give thanks for what was true and holy. Reception means accepting the fullness of Catholic faith, not denying every grace received before.

Why not “Bible alone”? Because the apostolic faith was transmitted both in inspired Scripture and in the living apostolic Tradition, and the Church preceded and discerned the New Testament canon.

Why do Catholics need a Pope? Catholics believe Christ gave Peter a distinctive pastoral role and that the Petrine ministry continues in the Bishop of Rome as a visible service of unity and faith.

Is every papal statement infallible? No. Infallibility has defined conditions. The Pope can make prudential judgements, personal remarks or disciplinary decisions that are not infallible definitions.

Why confess sins to a priest? Because Christ gave the apostles and their successors a real ministry of reconciliation. The priest is the sacramental minister; God is the source of forgiveness.

Why pray to Mary and saints if Jesus is the one mediator? All Christian prayer and intercession depends entirely on Christ’s unique mediation. Asking another member of Christ’s Body to pray for us does not create a rival mediator.

Why use statues, icons and relics? Catholics do not believe wood, plaster or relics are gods. Sacred images direct the mind to Christ and his saints; honour shown to an image is not adoration of the material object.

Why call the Mass a sacrifice if Jesus died once? Because the one sacrifice of Calvary is made sacramentally present; Christ is not crucified again.

What about “faith alone” and works? Catholics affirm that justification is entirely by God’s grace. The faith that receives grace is called to become living faith expressed in love, obedience and works made possible by grace.

Is purgatory a second chance to be saved? No. It is purification for those who die already in God’s grace and assured of salvation.

Why can I not normally receive Communion before reception? Because Eucharistic Communion expresses full visible communion in the Church’s faith, sacraments and pastoral governance as well as personal faith in Christ.

Must I believe every apparition or private revelation? No. Private revelations do not belong to the deposit of faith. Even approved ones are not placed on the same level as Scripture and apostolic Tradition.

Can Catholics have legitimate differences of opinion? Yes, on many prudential, political, theological and devotional questions. Full communion does not require identical tastes; it does require faithful acceptance of what the Church definitively teaches in faith and morals.

Readiness Conversation

This is not a pass/fail examination. It is a pastoral conversation about whether you can make the profession of faith freely, honestly and fruitfully.

Area	Readiness looks like	Do not require
Baptism	A valid Christian Baptism has been established, or any genuine doubt has been resolved according to Church law.	A second Baptism “just to be safe”.
Free intention	You freely ask for full communion and understand that becoming Catholic is a real ecclesial commitment.	Pressure from family, partner or parish.
Catholic faith	You understand the main shape of Catholic faith and are prepared sincerely to profess what the Catholic Church believes, teaches and proclaims as revealed by God.	Perfect theological vocabulary or the absence of every question.
Authority	You understand Scripture, Tradition and the Magisterium and accept the Church’s teaching authority.	Knowing every canonical distinction.
Sacramental faith	You understand Baptism, Confirmation, Penance, the Eucharist and the Mass at a level proportionate to your capacity and background.	Academic sacramental theology.
Moral life	You intend to live according to Catholic moral teaching and are honest about areas requiring conversion or pastoral help.	A claim that you will never sin again.
State of life	Marriage history and any other canonical situation affecting sacramental life have been honestly discussed and appropriately resolved.	An idealised personal history.
Penance	You have been prepared for Confession and normally celebrate it before reception.	Scrupulous recall of every venial fault.
Confirmation	The parish has established whether valid Confirmation/Chrismation has already been received and what is required at reception.	Automatic re-Confirmation.
Catholic practice	Sunday Mass, prayer and parish belonging are becoming ordinary parts of your life.	A polished public testimony.
Sponsor and support	A suitable sponsor or other Catholic support is in place as appropriate.	A sponsor chosen only for social reasons.
Pastoral judgement	Questions have been brought honestly to the priest, who makes the final judgement of readiness according to Church law and diocesan practice.	Self-certification by completing pages or attending a fixed number of meetings.

IF YOU CANNOT YET PROFESS SOMETHING Do not conceal the difficulty and do not force a deadline. Name the teaching clearly, ask what the Church actually means, and continue the conversation. Honest delay is better than a profession made with a private reservation you know you cannot accept.

A Simple Rule of Catholic Life

Begin small. The purpose is steady discipleship, not a burdensome private programme.

Rhythm	A simple practice
Every Sunday	Participate at Mass unless excused for a serious reason; prepare for Communion and make thanksgiving afterwards.
Daily	Make the Sign of the Cross; offer the day to God; read a short passage of Scripture; pray briefly morning and evening.
Regularly	Receive the Sacrament of Penance; do not wait for a crisis before returning to mercy.
During the year	Live Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter with the Church; observe days of fasting and abstinence according to Church law.
Learn	Keep a Catechism or reliable Catholic source available. When a question arises, look for the Church's actual teaching before arguing with a caricature.
Belong	Know people in the parish. Do not make Catholic life only a private relationship with the priest.
Serve	Practise concrete charity in family, parish and community. Ask where your gifts can serve others.
With money and possessions	Give responsibly, live justly, avoid greed and remember the poor.
When you fail	Repent, go to Confession when needed, repair harm where possible and begin again.
For Christian unity	Pray for other Christians, speak about them with charity and bear witness to Catholic faith without contempt or triumphalism.

A PRAYER AFTER RECEPTION Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for leading me into the full communion of your Church. Keep me faithful in the Eucharist, humble in Confession, attentive to your Word, obedient in faith and generous in charity. Make my life a witness to the unity and holiness you desire for all your people. Amen.

Sources and Parish Authority

This parish booklet is a concise doctrinal and pastoral guide. It does not replace the approved liturgical books, canon law, diocesan norms or the pastoral judgement of the priest.

Primary sources

- Sacred Scripture, especially Matthew 16:13-20; Matthew 28:18-20; John 6; John 17; John 20:19-23; Acts 2:42; Romans 6; 1 Corinthians 10-11; Ephesians 4; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 1 Timothy 3:15.
- Catechism of the Catholic Church: especially nos. 74-141 (Revelation, Scripture and Tradition); 422-682 (Christ); 683-1065 (Holy Spirit, Church, Mary and last things); 1076-1690 (sacramental life); 1691-2557 (moral life and prayer).
- Code of Canon Law: especially canons 204-205 (full communion); 842-845 (sacraments and Baptism); 879-896 (Confirmation); and other canons applicable to the individual candidate's circumstances.
- Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults / Rite of Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church, including the provisions for already baptised candidates and the approved texts in force in England and Wales.
- Order of Confirmation and the Roman Missal as currently approved for use in England and Wales.
- Second Vatican Council: Lumen gentium, Unitatis redintegratio, Dei Verbum and Orientalium Ecclesiarum.
- Current diocesan policy and the directions of the parish priest govern local arrangements, records, timing, sponsors and individual pastoral cases.
- Rev. Joseph Deharbe, S.J., Full Catechism of the Catholic Religion (historical catechetical reference only). Current doctrine is read in continuity with the Church's living Magisterium; current law and liturgical discipline are taken from the present approved sources.

SPECIAL NOTE FOR EASTERN CHRISTIANS A baptised Christian from an Eastern Church must not simply be treated as a Western Protestant candidate. The Catholic Church respects valid Eastern sacraments and the person's proper Eastern ecclesial heritage. The priest should establish the correct Church sui iuris and reception procedure with diocesan or competent Eastern Catholic guidance before the rite is arranged.

PASTORAL STANDARD The candidate should be able to make the Catholic profession of faith freely and sincerely, approach the sacraments with proper disposition, and begin ordinary Catholic life. Readiness is not perfect memory, a polished testimony or the elimination of every future question.