

# What is Christian Initiation?



In the Christian tradition, from the time of the apostles, people have joined the community that has the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as its very core. The process by which they become members of the community of faith is known as Christian Initiation.

**“The Sacraments of Christian Initiation – Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist – lay the foundations of every Christian life.” (CCC 1212)**

By these three sacraments we become one with Jesus in his passage through death to new life in God's reign. Here and now, our humanity is caught up in Christ's own glorified humanity;

**+By Baptism**, we share in his death and resurrection through immersion in the baptismal waters.

**+By Confirmation**, we share in the gifts of the Spirit of Christ with which we were filled at our baptism and empowered to share those gifts with the world.

**+In the Eucharist**, we are nourished with the food of life, the Body and Blood of Christ, which strengthens and sustains the Christian family in its mission to the world.

This is why they are called sacraments of initiation – through them we are initiated into the community that holds the paschal mystery (the life, death and resurrection of Christ) as the very source of life.

Originally, these three sacraments formed a single celebration, which was celebrated at the Easter Vigil. For children of catechetical age (age 7 or more) and for adults, this has remained the preferred means of initiation through the history of our Church.

When, in the case of infants and children below the age of 7, we separate the celebration of the sacraments, we need to keep in mind the proper order and the unity of these sacraments. The current practice (for the last 100 years or so) which has had us celebrating First Communion prior to a child's completion of their initiation in Confirmation, has not expressed this reality as clearly. The plan throughout the Roman Catholic Church to restore the order of these three sacraments is an effort towards maintaining a higher degree of consistency between church teaching and practice.

From earliest times, the sacraments of Christian Initiation were intended to be only a beginning. Initiation into any club, organization, or way of life is always the start, and not the end of the learning and the formation process. In much the same way we, as parents, fully expect that, once our child has begun going to school in kindergarten their educational journey will carry on for many years to come – the new members of the Christian community were called to continue to study and deepen their faith and their commitment to service for the rest of their lives.

Christian Initiation and the process of catechesis (education and faith formation) involved is not just for children, and does not end with the Sacraments of Initiation, but is merely the start of a lifelong process of learning, growing, and deepening our relationship with the God who loves us, and the Christ whose life we now hold within us, through the action and guidance of the Holy Spirit!