

Parish Policy for OCIA and Sacramental Preparation

Parish Name: St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church

Diocese: The Archdiocese of Indianapolis

Pastor: Father Suresh Edward

1. Purpose

This policy outlines the expectations and requirements for individuals preparing to receive the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Eucharist) in the Catholic Church. It is intended to ensure proper formation, readiness, and full participation in the life of the Church.

2. Eligibility and Sacramental Status

- Candidates must provide accurate information regarding their baptismal status.
- Those baptized in another Christian tradition with a valid baptism are to submit a baptism certificate, if available.
- Unbaptized candidates will prepare to receive Baptism in the Church.

3. Marital Status

- Candidates who are married or previously married must disclose their marital history.
- Any prior marriages must be reviewed according to Church law.
- A declaration of nullity must be obtained by any person who has a prior marriage and is seeking the sacraments.
- Where applicable, a declaration of nullity (annulment) must be obtained before the reception of the sacraments.
- If their current partner also has a prior marriage, that partner must likewise obtain a declaration of nullity—not for their own reception of sacraments, but so that the present union can be validated in the Church, thereby allowing the person entering the Church to receive the sacraments.
- Until marital situations are regularized, reception of certain sacraments may be delayed.

4. Attendance and Participation

- Regular attendance at all OCIA sessions is required.
- Attendance will be recorded and monitored.
- Absences should be communicated in advance when possible.
- Frequent or prolonged absences may result in postponement of the reception of the sacraments.

5. Formation Process

- Candidates will receive instruction in:
 - Sacred Scripture
 - Teachings of the Church
 - Prayer and spiritual life
 - Moral teachings and Christian living
- Candidates will participate in liturgical rites, including:
 - The Rite of Acceptance (if applicable)
 - The Rite of Election
 - The Scrutinies

6. Sponsors (Godparents)

- Each candidate must have a qualified sponsor who meets the requirements set by the Church.
- Sponsors must be practicing Catholics who can assist the candidate in living the faith.
- If a sponsor belongs to St. Paul's Parish, there is no need to provide a letter of good standing. However, if the sponsor is from another parish, they are required to submit a letter of good standing from their parish, confirming that they are a practicing Catholic and eligible to serve as a sponsor

7. Commitment to the Catholic Faith

- Candidates are expected to approach this process with seriousness and sincerity.
- They must be willing, after sufficient formation, to accept and live according to the teachings of the Church.

- This includes embracing the Church’s teachings on:
 - The dignity of marriage and family life
 - The sanctity of human life
 - Living a moral life in accordance with the Gospel

8. Readiness for the Sacraments

- The reception of the sacraments is based on:
 - Adequate formation and understanding
 - Demonstrated commitment to the faith
 - Regular participation in the program
- The final determination of readiness rests with the Pastor and OCIA team.

9. Records and Documentation

- The parish will maintain records of:
 - Attendance
 - Sacramental documentation
 - Sponsor information
- All records will be handled with appropriate confidentiality.

10. Conclusion

The OCIA process is a sacred journey of conversion and growth. The parish community is committed to supporting each candidate with guidance, prayer, and pastoral care as they prepare to enter fully into the life of the Church.

Candidate Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Pastor / OCIA Director: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Guidelines for Candidates (OCIA / Sacramental Preparation)

- If you have been married more than once, you must seek an annulment for any previous marriages. Without this, there is no guarantee that you will be able to receive the sacraments.
- If you were baptized in another Christian denomination with a baptism recognized as valid by the Catholic Church, please make every effort to obtain your baptism certificate.
- The parish will maintain an attendance record for all candidates.
- Information regarding your baptism and sponsors (godparents) will be collected and recorded.
- You will be informed about important liturgical steps, including the Rite of Election and the Scrutinies.
- Attendance at all classes is required.
 - o In case of a serious emergency, absence may be excused.
 - o However, frequent or prolonged absence may delay or prevent the reception of the sacraments.
- Please take your faith journey seriously as you participate in these classes.
- You are expected to be open to and, after proper formation, commit to living according to Catholic teachings.
- Candidates should understand that the Church calls all members to live according to its moral teachings, including:
 - o The dignity of marriage as a sacramental union between one man and one woman
 - o The sanctity of human life from conception
 - o Living a life of chastity according to one's state in life
- After sufficient preparation and a sincere commitment to the faith, you may be considered ready to receive the sacraments.

This is not just a program, but a journey of faith and relationship with God. The parish community is here to walk with you, support you, and pray for you every step of the way.