

Welcome to the Catholic family! Whether you are a neophyte or a baptized Christian recently welcomed into full communion, there is great joy in celebrating this point in your journey with Christ and the Church. The sacraments you received changed your being forever. No matter what comes later, you are now marked with the sign of the Catholic faith, baptized and confirmed with water and the Spirit in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. You share fully in the thanksgiving of Eucharist. You are knitted into the Body and Blood of Christ that we share in holy communion. Each week you are sent out from Mass to love and serve the Lord in your day-to-day life. Hopefully, you continue to listen for God's voice,

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expecting to encounter Christ in ordinary places and respond in pondering, prayer, and practices.

Initiation is about both the individual and the community, about what has been, what is, and what will be. As you already know, this is part of why the Church dedicates the period from Easter to Pentecost to mystagogy, a time after initiation when you begin to unpack the mysteries experienced through the sacraments you celebrated. During this time that the community walks with newly initiated people, we continue to be formed in the Catholic life, exploring the Paschal Mystery as a free divine gift to be entered into rather than a puzzle to be solved. Together we examine the gospel more deeply, share in the Eucharist, do works of charity, and pray in response to visible signs of God's invisible action.

Then this period of the parish's intense focus on you as a new initiate comes to an end. Continuing to build your personal life of prayer and discipleship can be challenging as you interact less with your sponsor and others who guided you through the initiation process. This booklet is meant to help you navigate this transition.

DIVING DEEPER

Ponder ✦ Christ's life, death, and resurrection are one action we call the Paschal Mystery. The *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* points out that "In the liturgy of the Church, it is his own paschal mystery that Christ signifies and makes present. By giving the Holy Spirit to his apostles he entrusted to them and their successors the power to make present the work of salvation through the Eucharistic sacrifice and the sacraments, in which he himself acts to communicate his grace to the faithful of all times and places throughout the world" (222). In each Sunday Mass we have the opportunity to dive deeper into the mystery of Christ.

Pray ✦ *God of Grace, I am awed by your unconditional love and the lengths you go to so all creation will live in love with you and one another. Thank you for communicating this sacrificial love over and over again through the sacraments. Amen.*

Practice ✦ Choose one way you will practice sabbath on Sunday in addition to going to Mass.

Avoiding work or activities that get in the way of worshiping God with joy, or performing works of mercy, can help you keep space in your mind, body, and soul to ponder the Paschal Mystery.

MY FAITH

Ponder ✦ The initiation sacraments are milestones on your faith journey. Whether you were baptized, confirmed, and received holy communion in one liturgy or at different points in time, the outcome is the same: You are forever marked as a part of God's family made one in Christ. "My" faith and "our" faith are forever connected. Initiation and being welcomed into full communion are moments when you and the Church publicly declare your life-long commitment to knowing and loving God more and more each day.

Pray ✦ *God the Father, you gave me life and the capacities to use faith and reason. Help me to remain curious and open to knowing and loving you as a member of the Church. Amen.*

Practice ✦ Go through the resources you used to learn about Christ and the Catholic Church during your initiation process. Choose one that you found most helpful for wrestling with doubt or confusion and put it, along with a Bible, in a place you see every day as a reminder that there is a community of faith continuing to walk with you.

OUR FAITH

Ponder ✦ Every time you participate in Mass, you publicly profess your faith as a Catholic. You do this by praying the Creed and responding to the prayers. You also do this through the action of leaving your home to gather with others at the church. By the simple act of worshiping God with others, you proclaim “I do” to the question about believing in the holy, catholic Church and the communion of saints. All the words and actions of the Mass are important. Yet, if we don’t regularly come through the doors of a church to participate in the Eucharist on Sunday, it becomes harder and harder to honestly say “Amen” to the prayer “This is our faith.

This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Pray ✦ *All you saints in heaven, pray for all those who share faith in Jesus Christ. Help us, especially me, profess our belief in simple ways each day. Amen.*

Practice ✦ Make a plan to meet up with someone at Mass on an upcoming weekend.

A ONE-TIME THING THAT CHANGES YOU EVERY DAY

Ponder ✦ Catholic Christians receive the sacrament of baptism only once. Once a member of the Catholic family, always a member. The graces given through baptism change your very being on that day and all the days that follow, if you let them. For Catholics, rebirth in Christ is a lifelong process of conversion rooted in baptism. Every day, we strive to die to sin and rise to new life in Christ.

Pray ✦ *Loving Father, thank you for making me new in baptism. Help me to live into the reality of being your child reflecting Christ. Amen.*

Practice ✦ Catholics place holy water fonts near the entrances of our worship spaces as reminders of baptism. Making the Sign of the Cross using holy water is a repeatable way to show trust in the ongoing nature of conversion and to call upon the Holy Spirit to help you deal with the challenges that come with striving to be more like Christ as you live and work.

PERMANENT RELATIONSHIPS

Ponder ✦ One prayer after baptism says: “You have become a new creation and have clothed yourself in Christ” (RCIA, 360). The Church declares that through baptism you permanently belong to Christ and bear his image in the world. The confirmation rite goes on to say: “Now you are to share in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit among us” (RCIA, 364). Just as the Most Holy Trinity becomes know-able in one God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, our initiation puts us into permanent relationships with others.
