

THE CATECHUMENATE AT SAINT MARK CHURCH

Step One: Inquiry

Anyone seeking to know God in the Orthodox Church is welcome and free to attend Church services and various instructional classes, and to interact with the faithful while inquiring into the Faith and Life of the Church. Speak with the Priest (Pastor) of the parish with questions and for direction.

Step Two: Become a Catechumen

A catechumen is a person who decides they want to be a follower of Christ - a Christian - in the Orthodox manner, that is, a person who begins to believe the Orthodox Faith and practice the Orthodox way of life.

Becoming a catechumen is done with prayers in the Church, being enrolled officially as a catechumen. This is similar to getting engaged prior to marriage. Becoming a catechumen is a commitment to God and the Church to cease doing what is not of Christ, and to start living the righteousness of Christ with active participation in the life of Christ and His Church.

The goal of the catechumen is faithfulness to Christ and His Church which is finally sealed when the catechumen is baptized and/or chrismated (anointed with the Holy Chrism) and then participates in Holy Communion with the rest of the faithful.

Step Three: Baptism, Chrismation, Holy Communion

After a period of instruction (Gk., *catechesis*) and formation in Christ, the catechumen is baptized and/or chrismated and given Holy Communion, which is the essence of the Christian's life from here to eternity in the kingdom of God.

The process of instruction and formation - the catechumenate - averages about a year in length. Not only must the catechumen get to know the Orthodox Church and its people, but the Church and its people need to get to know the catechumen and his or her true intentions and character. The catechumen chooses a sponsor (God-parent) who can vouch for his or her integrity and accompany them through the process in prayer.

Prior to baptism and/or chrismation, the catechumen prepares for and comes to Confession, leaving the old life apart from Christ behind and taking on the new life in Christ in forgiveness, repentance, and love.

Christ is the Groom, and the Church and its members His Bride, a marriage forever, and this relationship of God's love begins here and now in God's holy Church.