

Come, Holy Spirit

The Order of Christian Initiation at The Basilica

BY MELISSA STREIT

In the Sacrament of Confirmation, the baptized person is “sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit” and is strengthened for service to the Body of Christ. The United States Catechism for Adults asserts that “Confirmation deepens our baptismal life that calls us to be missionary witnesses of Jesus Christ in our families, neighborhoods, society, and the world. We received the message of faith in a deeper and more intensive manner with a great emphasis given to the person of Jesus Christ, who asked the Father to give the Holy Spirit to the Church for building up the community in loving service.”

There are three possible paths to Confirmation in our parish community. Confirmation for youth who have already received the Catholic sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation, and Eucharist occurs typically between eighth and tenth grade

in conjunction with our children and youth faith formation program. Youth who wish to become Catholic from other faith traditions participate in the Order of Christian Initiation of Children (OCIC), and adults who wish to become Catholic participate in the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA).

You may have previously heard the acronyms RCIA and RCIC. In November 2021, the US Bishops updated their translations from Latin so the programs are now called OCIA and OCIC, respectively. The full initiation process is an Order (from the Latin *ordo*) and within the process are several separate Rites. This ongoing journey of Christian discipleship doesn't end with Confirmation for any of us; it is a lifelong expedition of faith. Staff member Katie Wethli coordinates all Sacramental preparation at The Basilica, which

includes Baptism, First Reconciliation, First Eucharist, Youth Confirmation, the Order of Christian Initiation for Children/Adults, and Marriage. While most Catholic parishes offer Sacramental preparation, she believes the quality of our programming sets The Basilica apart. For OCIA in particular, she explains, “speakers at our weekly classes are geared toward answering the important questions in people's lives. Basilica staff and volunteers as well as theologians from Saint John's School of Theology, the University of Saint Thomas, and Saint Catherine University discuss different topics, such as Scripture, Church history, and the role of the saints. In addition to our weekly speakers, the kind and supportive OCIA team community tends to be a highlight of our program.”



JERRY WHITE

Jerry White went through OCIA several years ago after attending a Baptist church as a child. He describes his life from adolescence until about 2002 as “mostly Godless.” “I had a dysfunctional childhood with alcohol and drug use,” he says. “My faith journey really began in 2003 when I was admitted to treatment for drug abuse. The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous are based on spiritual principles and finding a higher power of your own understanding. That's where I began seeking God and began praying for help, and help came.”

Jerry and his wife, Constance, watched a daily Christian television program for eight years, delving into books and conferences with the same television host. Constance, who was raised Catholic but had fallen away, suggested finding a church. They both agreed that something was missing and they wanted to belong to a community rather than merely worshiping in private. After trying several churches and denominations over a few months, they tried The Basilica. Jerry recalls, “After the first Mass we attended it felt like home.”

Constance attended a Basilica program for people who had been raised Catholic and were returning to the faith while Jerry considered OCIA. “I met with Paula, who was the Director of Learning at the time,”

he explains, “and she assured me I was under no obligation and, like AA, it was a program of attraction rather than promotion. Thus began my journey to becoming Catholic.” Jerry was welcomed fully into the Catholic church at the Easter Vigil in 2011.

“We promote an atmosphere of invitation. An invitation to learn about the Catholic faith, an invitation to grow spiritually, an invitation to grow closer to Christ. Being a sponsor is an opportunity to walk alongside another person on their faith journey and there are few things more intimate than that. Faith is very personal and to be part of that journey is a very special part of discipleship. I found it to be a beautiful experience.” — Jerry White



KATIE WETHLI

Coordinator of
Sacramental Preparation

Raised in Pittsburgh, PA, Katie found a deep longing to know God in her

teens. She sang in a Catholic worship band and participated in a youth group that shaped her late adolescent years. After graduating from the Catholic University of America with degrees in vocal performance and digital production, she completed a year of service in Dublin, Ireland, as a church singer and media creator. Her liturgical composer supervisor suggested she consider a master's degree in liturgical music at Saint John's School of Theology in Collegeville, MN.

While there, Katie had several classes taught by Dr. Johan van Parys, who is on the Saint John's faculty in addition to being The Basilica's Director of Liturgy and Managing Director of Ministries. After completing her degree, she joined The Basilica staff in summer 2023. "My colleagues and The Basilica volunteers have made my first year full of gratitude," she enthuses. "As someone who knew few people in Minneapolis, I worried about finding a community. Thankfully, I have continued to meet people who shower me with love and good Minnesota food!"

In her free time, Katie is completing a vocal album in Boston. She enjoys walks around the lakes, good lattes, fall scented candles, and family visits to Pittsburgh every few months.

"It is entirely your own faith journey guided by the love, prayers, and friendship of your fellow Basilica community members. There are no wrong answers and no wrong experiences. If you are open to learning and growing in your faith, you are in the right place!" — Katie Wethli



JAIME ZOLIK

Jaime Zolik is newer to OCIA, recently completing the program and returning this year as a sponsor. "I was

not raised in any faith," she recalls. "I was curious about Christianity when I was in elementary school and asked to go to a few Masses with a family friend, but it wasn't until a few years ago that I began to really go on my faith journey."

A conversation with an elderly woman in Syracuse, NY, inspired her to learn more, then an architecture tour led her to The Basilica. "I decided to go to Mass by myself the following week and accidentally left my wallet behind," she says. "When I picked it up at the office the next day, I was able to talk to a staff member about OCIA."

"I was hesitant to participate in meetings and open up to the experience for a very long time," Jaime shares. "The sponsors and candidates were all very welcoming and encouraged me to speak and say my thoughts. One of my biggest fears going in would be that I would be pressured to feel or act a certain way in order to fit in with the group, but I never did. OCIA allowed me to go at my own pace and allow myself to open up at the right time for me."

She wasn't originally planning to return this year as a sponsor, saying "I felt I was too new to the Catholic Church and to my faith to help anyone along their way," but she has reconsidered. "Another OCIA member said I should give it a shot. They thought I would be good at it, so I gave it a second thought and listened to God's call."

"The thing that I most appreciate is that I feel like I can be myself here," she adds. "I feel a peaceful presence that gives me the strength to be me. I feel like I belong somewhere amongst people who also seek to further their faith in the way that we are called to do."

"I would say to try it out, and if you do not feel that it is the right path for you then you can part with the program and look for your path elsewhere. As a sponsor, do not be afraid if you do not have the answers. You are not supposed to. You are there to talk, think, and support the path of your sponsee." — Jaime Zolik



ADDIE MULQUEEN

Teens also find The Basilica's OCIC experience to be meaningful. Addie Mulqueen was raised in a mostly Lutheran

family but became more agnostic in middle school because she felt "people used the faith for horrible things." In 2022, she felt moved by the life of Saint Joan of Arc, began researching her more, and went to church every week with her grandparents.

Addie found The Basilica with her mother in 2023—the building drew them in. "We ended up going a few weeks later, and I fell in love instantly," she gushes. "Warmth and love radiate off the building, inside and out." She started the OCIC process a short time later, coming from a distant suburb with her mother or grandmother for the classes.

Addie is considering a call to sisterhood and definitely learned to trust God more deeply and to ask for help through prayer. She relies on the words of her patron, Saint Joan of Arc: "It is better to be alone with God. His friendship will not fail me, nor His counsel, nor His love. In His strength, I will dare and dare and dare until I die."

"Just go for it! You really don't have anything to lose, and you gain a deeper understanding of God, more opportunities within the Church, and the connections you make with others are so rewarding." — Addie Mulqueen

CONSIDERING BECOMING CATHOLIC?

If you are interested in becoming Catholic or are willing to sponsor someone on their faith journey, please contact Katie Wethli at kwethli@mary.org for more information about OCIA or OCIC at The Basilica.✝

Melissa Streit is the Director of Engagement and Safe Environment Coordinator at The Basilica and was an OCIA participant in 1996-97.