

RCIA/OCIA Testimonials Through the Years

2025 Testimonial from Delainie Minillo



Participating in the OCIA program was one of the most uplifting and rewarding experiences of my life. The journey not only deepened my understanding of the Catholic faith but also brought me a profound sense of peace, purpose, and community. I felt truly supported by Kim and the other program participants and inspired every step of the way. Looking back, I only wish I had taken this step sooner. Embracing my relationship to God and my faith through OCIA has been a life-

changing blessing that I will always cherish. I miss my Tuesday nights!

2025 Anonymous Testimonial



When I first joined the OCIA program, I'll be honest, I was doing it mostly to please my future in-laws. They're devout Catholics, and while I respected their faith, I didn't understand why being catholic over a non-denominational Christian mattered. I figured I'd go through the motions, check the box, and move on. After weeks went by something shifted. What I began to realize is OCIA wasn't pressure or obligation, it was an honest invitation to explore and to ask those hard questions. The

people in the group were open and kind. They weren't trying to sell me anything; they were just walking the same road. Somewhere along the way, I stopped going just for my in-laws. I started going for me. And one of the greatest surprises was the friendships I made. We celebrated milestones together, shared stories, laughed and truly became like family. I went into OCIA expecting to sit quietly in the back row. I came out not only as a confirmed Catholic, but as part of a community I never expected to fall in love with. OCIA didn't just change how I think about faith, it changed how I think about belonging. I'm truly grateful for the journey. Even if you don't end up becoming Catholic, you might walk away knowing more about yourself and what truly matters to you. And that alone makes the experience worth it.

2025 Testimonial from Dodi Weirick



As I sit here on vacation I am spending time reflecting on the last year. Where do I begin.... I can start by saying this was one of the greatest commitments I have done in a very long time. I was raised in a Catholic household but was never Catholic. I followed many rituals but was not baptized or confirmed. This was something I longed to do for very many years. In my heart I knew I always wanted to be a part of such a great and meaningful religion. It truly came to light on a trip my son took me on two years ago - we went to Italy and we experienced the beautiful churches and more specifically the Vatican. The feeling I got during this tour sealed my desire to become Catholic. My son asked me one day 6 months later if I would like to go to Mass one Sunday morning. We attended a mass at St Brigid and sat in the very back. As we attended more frequently we moved closer to the front. From that point on we were hooked. My son attended some OCIA classes that fall and a year later we started our journey.

Some key takeaways from OCIA:

- This is your journey not anyone else's.
- If you ever feel any doubt and might feel you are not worthy to be a part of the Catholic religion, pray about it or talk to a deacon or priest. I found many signs I was on the right path!
- I was one of the older participants and it's never too late to start!
- St Brigid's OCIA class is excellent, we had a big class but we were such a close group always supporting each other!
- Open your heart to the possibilities of becoming Catholic, it is such a wonderful experience.

2024 Testimonial from Christine Schillinger



My joining the Catholic faith happened slowly, and then all at once. I was not raised with religion in my family home and my husband is what Catholic's lovingly call a "cradle Catholic." Before getting married, we decided we would raise our family Catholic- easy enough for me since I came with no faith-based strings. Being the planner that I am, I made sure we took all the right first steps: we got married in the church, we baptized our children within the first 3 months of life, and we even attended Mass at our local parish (before moving to

Dublin). But, no matter how much I planned, or how many times I took part in our religious commitments; I always felt like an outsider to God instead of in a community with Him. I needed to make a change; so I did what all inspired people do... I submitted an interest form online and didn't think about it again for about a year... When I realized my procrastination had gotten the best of me, I immediately emailed Kim Vanhuffel apologizing for the tardiness in my commitment to the program and begged her to let me still attend classes with promises of make-up work, extra hours, etc. Great start right? Kim calmly responded that I was in luck- the program didn't start for two more weeks... Now (whether I was ready or not), I was committed. You absolutely cannot back out on a make-up commitment email like that! I have to admit, I was nervous at first. Having a plan and executing that plan are two completely different things; especially when it includes shoring up 40 years with God. By the second session, my nerves were calm and I had already learned more about religion than I had in my entire life! Every week we covered topics ranging from Communion to Catholic orders to prayers. Each session was well organized and included fun elements like table discussion, games/quizzes, and guest speakers. The casual collaboration that took place at our tables made for fast connections and easy partnerships. I was making friends with people who were seeking the same consistency and understanding from religion that I was. We bonded over everything: readings at Mass, charity work, social justice conversations, and shared life experiences. I finally felt seen and loved by God. I finally felt home in my faith. Those feelings surround me today and they get stronger every time I walk onto the St. Brigid campus. Whether it's for Sunday Mass or a volunteer meeting, I feel the vibrations of the community and I see the glow reflecting from the faces of our parish members. Thanks to the support of my family and the amazing RCIA program at St. Brigid, I feel connected to God for the first time in my life and that connection grows deeper every day.

2018 Testimonial from Brian Hirsch



During the summer of 2018, a persistent thought rattled through my head. **“Why are you rejecting what I’m telling you when you know nothing at all about it?”** I thought about this statement many times over the next several weeks and realized I had made that very comment to my son. At this point I can’t even recall what we were talking about, but that phrase stayed with me. I have been married to a cradle catholic for almost 30 years. Our marriage was co- validated by the Church, and we agreed before we got married that our children would be raised Catholic. Despite this, my wife and I rarely discussed religion, mostly because I refused to do so. She did tell me from time to time that my absence of faith concerned her, and I knew that she prayed for me daily. At some point it dawned on me that the reason that phrase kept going through my mind was because I was rejecting faith without knowing anything about it. I mentioned this to my wife and she referred me to an article from the weekly church bulletin describing RCIA. At first I was extremely reluctant and would not even consider the possibility of exploring organized religion. No one was going to sell me anything! I decided to meet with the Adult Faith Formation Director, Kim VanHuffel, who informed me that RCIA was designed for people to inquire about Catholicism. I could go through the program, stop at any time, or even complete it and not convert. She further assured me that the outcome of this process would totally be my decision and I would not be pressured in any way. I decided to attend a few sessions to learn more about it. I also decided not to tell anyone except my wife who would ultimately become my sponsor. During the first meeting we were asked to talk about why we were there. It seemed everyone could point to a concrete reason such as an upcoming wedding or a desire to return to the Church. Then I got up and mentioned the phrase that kept gnawing at me and the concept of rejecting things out of ignorance. I expected this to be met with skepticism, but instead it seemed to be understood. As time went on, I found myself looking forward to each session. I started to talk about RCIA with friends and co-workers and received tremendous support. I also began to realize that something had been missing from my life. I felt at home. I became Catholic this year during the Easter vigil. The Church has provided me with a new found sense of community, and a feeling of being part of something much larger than myself. Through good times and bad, it is comforting to know that Christ watches over us. Some have said that I was called to the Church, perhaps by the Holy Spirit. I didn’t believe this at first, but I do believe it now.

2017 Testimonial from Andy Lee



At 13 years old, I was baptized in the Southern Baptist Church. I had a wonderful childhood anchored around our family's faith. We were a deeply religious family, with a focus on active participation in our church. However, I struggled with what I was being taught. I recall being very confused as a child. I was constantly worried that if I made God mad, I was spending eternity in hell. That's a lot for a young child/teenager to process. On July 13th, 1999 I met a wonderful woman. She is from a very small town in Northwestern Ohio that is centered on the Catholic faith. Family and faith are two foundations to daily life. We spent many Sundays with her family attending Mass. Prior to our marriage we met with the priest and participated in Pre Cana. I was impressed how accepting Catholics were of people from different Christian faiths. On September 8th, 2001 we were married at Holy Redeemer Catholic Church in New Bremen, Ohio. Ten years later to the day, we became the parents of a beautiful girl. She was the impetus to my eventual journey into RCIA. Raised in the Southern Baptist Church, I struggled with what my family would think of my daughter and myself becoming Catholic. Unfortunately, a number of other Christian faiths do not fully understand Catholicism. I discussed with my family that we planned to have her Baptized into the Catholic Church. While they had many questions, they also accepted and encouraged the journey. That was a great relief. Coinciding with her Baptism, I decided that I would join the Church. I continued to put it off though, always saying I'll do it next year. My father-in-law passed away in October 2015 after a heroic fight with cancer. Prior to his death, I promised him I would become Catholic and raise my family in the Church. Prior to the one-year anniversary of his death, I became very guilt ridden that I had not followed through on my promise. It was almost as if I could hear his deep, baritone voice in my head saying "you promised." After attending Mass one Sunday with my family, I decided it was time. No more excuses. That was one of the best decisions I've made in my life. I don't have enough adjectives to properly describe the process. Kim VanHuffel, the deacons, Monsignor, and the two seminarians (Luke LaFleur and TJ Lehigh), along with everyone who participated and lead us, made the transition a truly wonderful experience. I feel blessed that we had Kim guide us along this path. She is one of God's great teachers. Everything from my first RCIA class, discussion of the Word during Mass, our retreat, to the Easter Vigil was an amazing experience. The Sacrament of Reconciliation gave me an understanding of what a loving and forgiving God we have. The highlight of my journey was Holy Week and the events leading up to receiving the Body and Blood of Christ on the Easter Vigil. That was one of the most moving experiences of my life. I often think about the peace I had that day in times of stress and uncertainty. I would tell anyone wanting to come into the Catholic Church, joining RCIA will give you a real understanding of how patient, caring, and forgiving our God really is. That has been the greatest gift I have received. While God is just, He is also compassionate. He understands that we are human and we will make mistakes. Our Church is a place of comfort, understanding, and fulfillment. You'll find peace at every turn at Saint Brigid of Kildare Catholic Church. I'm also grateful how it has brought our family together. I am filled with tremendous joy and pride seeing my little girl excited to attend children's church.

Saint Brigid is a family-focused place of worship, accepting of everyone, judgmental of no one. Kim & Andy Lee with daughter Isla I would like to personally thank Kim VanHuffel. Having someone as educated and driven to help others was a real gift. Kim took the time, and still does, to explain the why behind our faith. I'm a very inquisitive person by nature. I always want to know why. As Monsignor expressed multiple times during our RCIA process, there's always a deeper meaning in our faith. Kim was always able to explain that meaning and connect how it affects our daily lives. I also want to thank my fellow RCIA candidates and catechumen. I learned so much from their questions and their journey. It was a blessing to see different people from different backgrounds come together around one truth. Thank you all.

2016 Testimonial from The Kohler Family



My husband and I both came from families that did not put a lot of emphasis on religion. Although we were raised to believe in God, we rarely attended church. We realized that something was missing from our lives and our relationship. We felt that it was important for our daughter to have a religious upbringing. Because our exposure to religion was limited, we weren't sure of what path to take. We did a lot of research, discussed our beliefs and concluded that Catholicism aligned most closely with our beliefs. We soon discovered that we had obstacles in our way. We had been married before and knew that we would need annulments. Although we had discussed many times the need for religion in our lives, we weren't as diligent in pursuing it as we should have been. My husband's father was a cradle Catholic and become more involved in his parish as he got older. His health had been declining over several years but he passed away unexpectedly in June of 2014. During his decline, his Priest was a great comfort to him and to our family. Going through that experience made us realize that it was important for us to do what we could to become a part of the Catholic Church.

Prior to my father-in-law's passing, we had enrolled

our daughter, Emily, in Kindergarten at St. Brigid. She started kindergarten in August of 2014. My husband also signed up for RCIA beginning that fall. We could not attend RCIA at the same time because of the child care needs of our daughter. Both of us still needed to complete the annulment process so we met with Sister Joan Harper and Deacon Candidate Paul Zemanek to find out about the process and what we would need to complete it. The explanation of that process was overwhelming but we knew it needed to be done in order for us to continue on our path. Even though it was hard to revisit and explain that time in our lives, it was cathartic for both of us. Once the paperwork was completed, all we could do was wait and be patient with the process. My husband completed RCIA in April of 2015 but because his annulment was not completed, he could not go through baptism and confirmation at the Easter Vigil. Our annulments were finally completed in November of 2015. My husband was Baptized and Confirmed in December of that year. I started RCIA in October of 2015. The RCIA process was a great experience and I learned so much by attending class, going to the dismissals and participating in the scrutiny's. Kim VanHuffel was a great support for our family during this time. I was Baptized and Confirmed at the Easter Vigil this year. Emily was also Baptized at the Easter Vigil.

It was a great experience for us to share together. My husband and I also had our marriage Convalidated in April. Even though our journey took a year and half to complete, it was the best decision we could have made for our family. It is important for us to attend Mass weekly as a family, to incorporate prayer and the Catholic traditions into our daily life and ensure that Emily has a Catholic education. We are so much stronger now as a family and look forward to our future in the Catholic faith.

2016 Article about The Kohler Family

“...it was the best decision we could have made for our family” My husband and I both came from families that did not put a lot of emphasis on religion. We realized that something was missing from our lives and our relationship. We felt that it was important for our daughter to have a religious upbringing. Because our exposure to religion was limited, we weren’t sure of what path to take. We did a lot of research, discussed our beliefs and concluded that Catholicism aligned most closely with our beliefs. We soon discovered that we had obstacles in our way. We had been married before and knew that we would need annulments. My husband’s father was a cradle Catholic. His health had been declining over several years but he passed away unexpectedly in June of 2014. During his decline, his Priest was a great comfort to him and to our family. Going through that experience made us realize that it was important for us to do what we could to become a part of the Catholic Church. Prior to my father-in-law’s passing, we had enrolled our daughter, Emily, in Kindergarten at St. Brigid. My husband also signed up for RCIA beginning that fall, which he completed in April of 2015 but because his annulment was not completed, he could not go through Baptism and Confirmation at the Easter Vigil. Our annulments were finally completed in November of 2015. My husband was Baptized and Confirmed in December of that year. I started RCIA in October of 2015. The RCIA process was a great experience and I learned so much by attending class, going to the dismissals and participating in the scrutinies. Kim VanHuffel was a great support for our family during this time. I was Baptized and Confirmed at the Easter Vigil this year. Emily was also Baptized at the Easter Vigil. It was a great experience for us to share together. My husband and I also had our marriage Convalidated in April. Even though our journey took a year and half to complete (because we went to different sessions), it was the best decision we could have made for our family. It is important for us to attend Mass weekly as a family, to incorporate prayer and the Catholic traditions into our daily life and ensure that Emily has a Catholic education. We are so much stronger now as a family and look forward to our future in the Catholic faith.

2015 Testimonial from The Victoria Bork



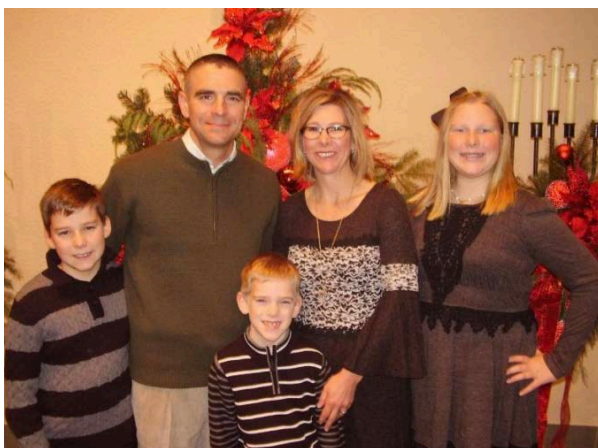
"We entered the lower level of the church for the first RCIA meeting. You see the faces of strangers and wonder "Will I share a lot or just a little about why I am here and want to become Catholic?" I shared somewhere in the middle. We went through a brief synopsis of the 17 weeks before our confirmation and I said my first prayer..."Lord, help me make it." Initially, it seems a distance before the first Eucharist is given, however each week provided the necessary pieces to understand the essence of the Catholicism. It was a true joy to gain the understanding of the Sacraments, the Mass, and the responsibilities of the clergy, the sisters, the staff and volunteers. Each individual has a role in creating the abundance of Catholic life and it is true that what one puts into their own faith, they will personify, and others will benefit. Everyone who spoke patiently listened to the many questions of the RCIA class while peacefully guiding us through their own experience. There was a lot of laughter along with the learning. Participation in the services was gradual and significant. Christmas meant more. Soon, the RCIA class attended different mass times and our sponsors joined us. Then February...and all of a sudden the reality of Easter and the message of Christ was upon us. The weekly classes provided instruction for a better life of prayer and March rolled by. Deacon-candidates Paul Zemanek and Steve Petrill arranged for the class to participate after Mass to learn the Rosary. Our entire family plus another RCIA candidate participated. As Steve led the prayer, *"he patiently answered all the questions from our youngest. The process explained the peace the prayers of the Rosary provides. It was truly a precious and an unforgettable family moment."* Holy week arrived and each day there was an opportunity to attend services throughout the Dioceses. Finally, Easter! The culmination of RCIA and the Eucharist. It was truly a precious day for our family. To have our own joy as new members and the pleasure to share it with the special people in the RCIA class. Looking back, the practice of a strong prayer life and understanding the Sacraments gives one faith in times of happiness and sorrow, surrounded by the people who share the same belief in Christ. RCIA is a journey, it can be a means to an end or the beginning of life-long connection.

2015 Article about The Bork Family

After contemplating the choice to become Catholic for many years, it was a Christmas Eve service at St. Brigid of Kildare that finally convinced Todd and Victoria Bork that they wanted to become Catholic. After that Christmas Eve Mass, Todd and Victoria had a conversation with Paul Zemanek that finally drove the Bork family to begin their journey to Catholicism. "That incredible conversation really set the tone for being so comfortable at St. Brigid every step of the

way. We have always had a strong faith in Christ; Catholicism provides the religion to match our faith," said Victoria. Todd and Victoria Bork, along with their three children Tatum, Owen and Liza had been coming to church for many years with Todd's mother and father - Frank and Dana Bork. Frank had been a Catholic all his life and Dana, not Catholic, had been attending church with her husband for about 50 years. Dana Bork also knew she wanted to become Catholic and decided she was ready to begin the RCIA process. A few years back Dana was visiting St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. "When I was at St. Peter's something came over me - it was right then that I knew I wanted to be a part of the Catholic Church," said Dana. So in January of 2014, Todd, Victoria met with Paul Zemanek to discuss the RCIA process and began their commitment. Paul referred Victoria to Mary Fran Cassidy to discuss the options for enrolling their children in a religious education program. "Mary Fran was very accommodating to create a plan for our family. She figured out a way to allow our children to receive the Sacraments but also get them in classes with their peers. Next year they'll be in their peer groups and able to experience the full program. I've been amazed at the teachers and the program-all that I've learned and all that they have done for our family," says Victoria. Since the three generations of the Bork family began the RCIA journey together they have enjoyed learning about the process with the other candidates they've met. Their favorite experience so far was when Deacon-candidates Paul Zemanek and Steve Petrill arranged for the class to participate after Mass to learn the Rosary. Their entire family plus another RCIA candidate participated. As Steve led the prayer, "he patiently answered all the questions from our youngest. The process explained the peace the prayers of the Rosary provides. It was truly a precious and an unforgettable family moment on this journey," says Victoria. "As a non-Catholic, Paul Zemanek has really helped lead us through this process of becoming a Catholic. He is our leader but he is much more than that - he has been the best anchor, mentor and teacher to us all throughout this process," says Dana. Dana will be receiving all three Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Holy Eucharist and Confirmation) as a Catechumen at the Easter Vigil. Todd and Victoria will be receiving the Sacraments of Confirmation and Holy Eucharist at the Easter Vigil. The children will also receive the Sacrament at Holy Eucharist at the Easter Vigil and will continue on in their religious education classes until they receive all of their Sacraments as they progress through their classes.

2014 Article about The Markert Family



After moving from Arkansas to Ohio to California and back to Ohio, the Markert family finally found their home in the Catholic church through the RCIA process at St. Brigid of Kildare. After parents Stephen and Traci had their children in several schools in several cities, their first experience with Catholicism was through their children attending Mission Basilica Catholic School in Orange County, California. It was there that their oldest daughter Lauren (11 at the time) really felt a part of the Catholic religion. She enjoyed her experience so much that she wanted her whole family to feel what Catholicism had given to her.

As their family again learned they would be moving back to Ohio, living near a Catholic school and church community became the number one priority in their search for a home. That is how they ended up at St. Brigid of Kildare and journeyed through the RCIA process to become a family fully Confirmed in the church. Their story is best told through the point of view of their daughter Lauren, 8th grade student at St. Brigid of Kildare School: "The environment of the Methodist church, the religion we were a part of before we converted to Catholicism, was nothing compared to the energetic, boastful, happy lifestyle of the Catholic Church. My mom only got the idea of Catholic schools through one of her friends, Mrs. Heit. Before we met the Heit's, I had no clue what the word "Catholic" meant. It sounded like a science experiment... scary, unknown, and unusual. So, out of the blue, my mom went to go tour this school after hearing such high praises from Mrs. Heit. The next thing you know, we are taking the entrance tests for Mission Basilica Catholic School." "The Mission was the first school where I truly felt at home. And looking back on that day and experience, that is truly where my pilgrimage to Catholicism began. With school going well, and social life pretty steady, I was ready to take my next leap of faith. I one day asked my mom about what I needed to do to become Catholic, and then, she did some research, and we went to talk about it with the parish office staff. With spiritual and physical preparations, I was scheduled to be Confirmed and receive my First Holy Communion on Easter, 2012." "One Friday after school, at pick up, I abruptly stopped in my tracks. I grabbed my mother's arm and told her I wanted Mrs. Yeager to be my sponsor. So, we went to find Mrs. Yeager, and she was honestly so shocked by the news. She seemed surprised, of course, but she also seemed honored. She accepted the role the following day, and that is truthfully the day I think both of my parents started to believe in the marvels and glory of God's power." "Then it was time to move back to Ohio. With the move to St. Brigid, my parents both made the decision to become Catholic through the RCIA program. I was very proud and shocked when my parents announced their soon-to-be conversion. We would all go to Mass and take Communion together as a family. There was nothing in the world I wanted more than for my family to feel the amazing powers of God. So every Thursday night, and occasionally other, random days, my parents set off on their version of a 'date'." "We went through questioning times with God, and we finally learned the true meaning of love and family. As a group, we now attend Mass every weekend, and my mom usually joins my two brothers and I at School Mass on Thursdays. I am so grateful that my parents decided to take a huge gamble and become Catholic. It made me so happy and proud that they did it together, as a team. God has blessed this family, with small, significant, daily miracles, and I am a truly blessed girl with a blessed and holy family." Stephen and Traci Markert, who completed RCIA last Easter at St. Brigid of Kildare, couldn't be happier with the path their daughter led them. Markert Family: Jacob (11), Stephen, Kyle (7), Traci, and Lauren (13) "Looking back on my RCIA experience, I think the one thing that stands out most to me is that being Catholic is a life long journey. You are never finished learning about this faith. We had people who would choose to attend our Thursday night meetings who just wanted to learn more....these parishioners really made an impression upon me. Just because RCIA is over, there is still so much to learn," Traci says of her experience. "This has been a really comfortable process for us," says Stephen. "We have gotten to know the parents of other students who attend St. Brigid school in addition to our RCIA group. Paul [Zemanek] has made for a very comfortable process for us."