

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR RETURNING CATHOLICS

There are many reasons why Catholics may no longer be participating actively in their faith. There are equally many reasons for Catholics to consider “coming home.” Here at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish we support and encourage you in your desire to explore what it might mean in your life to be more active in practicing your Catholic faith.

Below are a few of the questions we are most frequently asked by those who are thinking about returning to the Church.

I am thinking of returning to the Catholic Church. Do I have to go through some kind of program in order to do this?

No, if you are a Catholic who has been baptized and received First Holy Communion you do not need to go through a program. However, Our Lady of Guadalupe does offer a program, *Welcome Back*, which provides an opportunity for people to talk about their issues with the Church, to express their concerns, and to learn more about the Church. *Welcome Back* is staffed by a wonderful team of people who are trained to listen and eager to help.

If I return to the Church will I need to go to confession? Or can I just come to Mass?

You are always welcome to come to Mass! There are no prerequisites or conditions for attending Mass. However, before receiving Holy Communion you will most likely want to celebrate the sacrament of God’s mercy and reconciliation by making a confession. If you choose to participate in our *Welcome Back* program, the *Welcome Back* team can help you with this and answer any questions you might have. Otherwise, you can simply go to confession at one of the scheduled times.

I don’t remember how to go to confession. What do I do?

Knowing the “formula” for confession is not as important as simply availing yourself of the sacrament. If you go to confession and tell the priest that it has been a long time and you don’t remember exactly what to do, he will talk you through it without trouble or embarrassment. ***Click here to read a simple guide to the sacrament. Click here to view the schedule of confessions times at Our Lady of Guadalupe.*** It is also possible to call the parish office to arrange for an appointment for confession.

I am not married in the Catholic Church. Does that affect my return to the Church?

If this is your first marriage, then having your marriage recognized by the Catholic Church should be quite simple. If either you or your spouse have been married before we can still help you, but it will most likely take more time. Parish staff will help you with this.

I have been divorced. Does that affect my return? What if I am remarried?

Only if you have remarried. Divorce in and of itself does not affect your status in the church including participation in the sacraments, like Holy Communion. If you are remarried outside the Church you may still attend Mass, but it will be important for you to learn what is involved for the church to recognize your marriage. For instance, it is quite possible that you will be able to petition the Church for an annulment. The Parish staff who can help you with this.

- ***Click here for a link to the Tribunal website for the Archdiocese of Seattle.*** Here you will find answers to the most frequently asked questions regarding the annulment process.

I have unbaptized children. Can they be baptized?

Yes, they certainly may be baptized. ***Please click here to read more about the sacrament of baptism and to contact a staff person.***

I am not Catholic, but I am curious about the Catholic Church. What should I do?

The Church offers another wonderful process for people like you. It begins with an interview with a member of our faith formation team. After that there is what we call the “inquiry process” which is an opportunity to learn some basic information about the Church and to ask questions. Following that is the process known as the *Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA)*. ***Click here for more information.***

Can I volunteer for Our Lady of Guadalupe programs if I am currently an inactive Catholic or if I am not Catholic?

There are many opportunities for getting involved, and you do not need to be Catholic to volunteer. We welcome volunteers from all backgrounds. ***Click here for information.***

Do I have to register in order to be a Catholic in good standing?

Once you decide to be a parishioner at Our Lady of Guadalupe we do ask you to consider registering but it is not required. However, registering in the parish makes a statement of your intent, allows the parish to be in touch with you in important ways, and enables us to keep accurate sacramental records.