

Returning to the Church After a Long Absence?

Here's What to Do!

Maybe you have been away from the Church for a little while or for quite some time, but now you feel a tug at your heart calling you back to the Catholic Church. Listen to that tug. It's your Heavenly Father reaching his arms out to you, the Holy Spirit whispering in your ear, hoping to draw you home.

Maybe you now realize how far away from the Lord you've wandered and wonder whether you have what it takes to live a truly Catholic life. Regardless of why you left, you can always come home and return to the practice of the sacraments and the fullness of relationship with Jesus Christ and the Church he founded.

We hope you accept this as your invitation to rediscover the truth, wonder and mystery of the Catholic faith. As your brothers and sisters in our worldwide Catholic family, we want you back. We've missed you, and our Church is not the same without you.

Returning to the Church after being away for a while can be daunting. Be at peace. You're not alone!

To help you ease your way back into the Church, here is where to start:

1. Go to Confession

If you're returning to the Catholic Faith, you'll want to receive the Eucharist as soon as possible. But if you've been weighed down by sin — especially serious sin — you should first go to confession.

Going to confession after a long time can be intimidating. But let the priest you're confessing to know how long you've been away and that you're nervous about confessing again. Many priests are more than happy to gently lead you through your confession.

If possible, try to call the parish to arrange a confession time rather than going to the regularly scheduled (and often short) confession period right before Mass. That way, you won't feel rushed.

2. Join Your Local Parish and Get to Know the People There

One of the many beautiful things about Catholicism is that our religion is not a solitary practice. Every baptized Catholic is incorporated into the Mystical Body of Christ. We are called to worship God together at least once a week at Mass.

Many parishes have events to bring people together outside of Mass. One type of event to consider attending is an adult religion or theology class, or Bible study. Our parish offers different types of these classes and they can be a great way to dive deeply into the rich teachings of the Church. It also might be helpful to introduce yourself to our priest so that he can welcome you and journey with you.

3. Be Patient with Yourself and Trust in God

Above all, don't be discouraged by how much you have to do to get back into the rhythm of Catholic life. You're not going to turn into a perfect Catholic overnight. It's a step-by-step process.

Put your trust completely in God and start moving forward. As long as you persevere, God is going to give you the grace to grow into a more faithful Catholic.

To close, here's what Jesus had to say about those who return to Him after having been away: "I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance" (Luke 15:7).