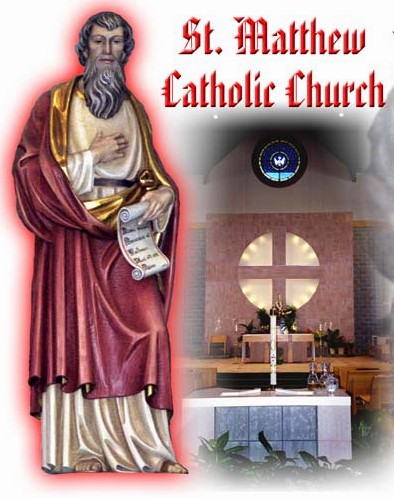
RCIA Handbook



***PURPOSE***:

This handbook has been developed to provide participants with background information concerning the RCIA operational process and is not meant to be construed as a book of rules or conduct. It is also not meant to detail all the elements of your individual journey nor the one shared by the group you join.

The topics noted below are all considered basic procedures that prospective candidates ask about the program and its overall basic process. We hope this handbook will be a useful resource for you during this time.

\* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* Mission Statement \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \*

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is the process used by the Catholic Church to present the beliefs of this faith to those adults who have made a conscious decision to explore coming into full communion with the Church.

The St. Matthew RCIA Team, in conjunction with the pastoral staff, is committed to the presentation of the doctrine of our faith in a welcoming and understandable manner to those members of our community who have made the decision to seek this step in their personal faith journey and join with us as we strive to live the mission of Jesus Christ through prayer, service, outreach, fellowship and a true sense of family as we minister to all members of our parish and community, especially to those in need.

**PARTICIPANT DEFINITIONS:**

**a) Catechumen**:  Anyone who is exploring the Catholic faith who has never been baptized or was not baptized in a Trinitarian Baptismal ceremony with the application of water and utilizing the words "In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

**b)** **Candidate**:  A validly baptized person (Catholics who have received the sacrament of Baptism or, as noted above, other validly baptized persons of a Christian Faith), who is interested in being received into full communion with the Catholic Church. This involves those who will be receiving both the sacrament of Confirmation and Eucharist for the first time at the Easter Vigil service, and includes those Catholics who have received Eucharist but are seeking reception of the sacrament of Confirmation.

**INTERVIEWS:**

Each Candidate and Catechumen is required to have an interview with one of the priests or deacons, in order to meet and discuss his/her progress in this journey of faith. You should schedule the interview yourself by calling the office (704-543-7677) and making an appointment. Let them know that you are in the RCIA program and want to schedule an appointment for your interview. The interviews should be concluded by January 2011.

**BAPTISMAL VERIFICATION**:

As noted above, the Catholic Church recognizes baptisms performed by other Christian faiths performing a “Trinitarian” Baptismal ceremony, and each Candidate is required to provide evidence of their baptism. It can take the form of a Baptismal Certificate issued by the church where you were baptized, a letter from a church official attesting to the baptism, and in certain circumstances, written statements from witnesses attesting to the baptism. Please begin your search for evidence as soon as possible. Contact one of the team members if you have any questions or would like some guidance on obtaining the required evidence. This documentation is needed before the Rite of Sending (see item 11 below).

**SPONSORS AND GODPARENTS:**

Each Candidate and Catechumen is required to have a sponsor. The sponsor must be a practicing Catholic in good standing who attends Mass regularly and who would provide a good example and support throughout the journey. Your sponsor is expected to attend the sessions with you to serve as another resource during the catechetical process, and simply be your “Catholic Buddy.” Please refer to “The Role of the Sponsor” handout for additional information.

For Catechumens, the sponsor will also serve as your Godparent. A spouse may not be your Godparent and, in general, we do not encourage or discourage the selection of your spouse or significant other, as your sponsor. If it is a positive influence and assistance in your journey and that person can attend with you on a regular basis then it will be the right choice for you. If there is a qualifying family member or friend who you want to be your Godparent and/or Sponsor, but who may be unable to attend sessions with you on a regular basis, please contact the Sponsor Coordinator, or one of the other team members, to discuss this. If you are unable to identify a person who meets these criteria, there are a number of parishioners who have volunteered to serve as a sponsor and you will be able to meet them at the sessions on a voluntary basis.

**RETREATS:**

There are two off-site retreats each year. The winter retreat is a one-day event for Candidates, Catechumens, and team members at the Oratory in Rock Hill on a Saturday in December. The spring retreat is a three-day session held two weeks before the Easter Vigil service and is the final preparation step in the overall journey, including the first administration of the sacrament of Reconciliation (if applicable to your journey). It’s held from Friday afternoon until Sunday afternoon and only Candidates, Catechumens, and team members attend. These retreats are an important part of the process and attendance is very important. Please check the schedule so you can have those weekends available. If you have a conflict, notify the RCIA Coordinator as soon as possible.

**SAINT Names for Confirmation:**

Each Candidate and Catechumen must select a patron saint for the sacrament of Confirmation. This name will serve as your Confirmation Name. Everyone is asked to prepare a short paper about the saint and why they chose that individual to be their patron saint. The paper will be presented at the spring retreat. There are several sources of information about the lives of saints available at the library, book stores, and online. Three internet sites you may find helpful in your search for information are:

1) http://www.catholic-forum.com/saints/indexsnt.htm

2) http://www.catholic.org/saints/,

3) http://www.catholic-pages.com/dir/ saints.asp.

You will learn more about this as the year goes on. Feel free to ask any of the team members about the process of selecting a patron saint.

**CEREMONIAL RITES:**

There are three special Rites in which the group will participate. These are especially important and we ask that you make every effort to attend. The Rite of Welcoming and the Rite of Sending will occur at St. Matthew during the 9:00 AM Mass on the scheduled dates. The Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion will occur at a Charlotte area church. Bishop Peter Jugis will preside at this Rite and it is one of three (Charlotte area, Asheville area, and the Greensboro area) that occur in the diocese each year. The Catechumens are emphasized at the Rite, but the service highlights the journeys that both the candidates and catechumens are experiencing and all RCIA programs in the diocese participate in this Rite. It is one of the last formal steps in the process of joining in full communion with the Catholic Church.

**ADVENT WREATH:**

Prior to the beginning of Advent, all Candidates and Catechumens are asked to make an Advent wreath. At the winter retreat you will have an opportunity to share the meaning of your wreath with the group. Information about the structure and meaning of the wreath will be provided closer to that time.

**15. RCIA TEAM CONTACT LIST:**

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