

St. Matthew Catholic Church

Confirmation Overview

2019-2020



"Jesus said to them, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

John 20:21-22

Candidate Name: _____

Parent Name: _____



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Confirmation History

Confirmation is one of the most ancient spiritual practices in the world, and springs from the human desire to be intimate with God by being filled with the Holy Spirit. Thousands of years ago, Hebrew prophets spoke of the Spirit of God resting upon the Messiah and one prophet in particular, Joel, said that God would one day, "pour out his Spirit upon all flesh". (Joel 2:28) The public ministry of Jesus began with him receiving the Holy Spirit after his baptism in the Jordan River by John the Baptist. (John 1:29-34) His public ministry ended after his resurrection with a promise that he would send the Holy Spirit to his disciples. (Acts of the Apostles 1:1-5)

Even back then, there was a time of preparation for the disciples to receive this gift. The apostles and other disciples followed and learned from Jesus for the three years of his ministry. After he left them, they spent days waiting in prayer for the Spirit to come. On the Jewish feast of Pentecost, the promised Holy Spirit came upon the followers of Jesus as they waited together in prayer in an upper room. Immediately afterward, they went out proclaiming the good news that Jesus had preached. (Acts of the Apostles 2:1-47) Ever since that time, even in the earliest churches, Christians have looked for the coming of the Holy Spirit to complete baptism. Originally the Holy Spirit was sent when the apostles came and laid hands on the baptized Christians. (Acts of the Apostles 8:14-17) Later, the authority of the apostles was passed to their successors, the bishops, who to this day continue to lay on hands for this sacrament.

Later, the bishops began to *anoint* with perfumed oil (called *chrism*) in addition to laying on their hands. Both *Christ* and *Messiah* mean *anointed*. Thus to be a Christian, means to be anointed, as Christ was anointed by God to be his servant. The term *Confirmation* came to be used to show how this sacrament is a ratification of baptism and a completion of Christian initiation.

As the churches grew larger in the various cities and moved out into the countryside, it became more and more difficult for the bishop to administer Confirmation immediately after baptism, and so the two sacraments became more and more separated, especially as baptism became more common for infants. Currently, the earliest age for Confirmation ordinarily allowed is age seven, and the bishop of each diocese sets the age for Confirmation. In this parish, all high school students are invited to be confirmed in the Life Teen Confirmation program.



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What is Confirmation?

The celebration of Confirmation should be seen as the result of a process that began with baptism, continued with regular mass attendance, religious education in the family and in the parish and should by this age, include a willingness to minister, to serve others in the church and the world around us.

The church calls all to be confirmed to enter into a special time of preparation before the sacrament. At St. Matthew Catholic Church, the time of preparation depends on which process you begin but in most cases in consists of two years of remote preparation and proximate preparation which includes: Catholic instruction, Mass, community service, fellowship with other Catholic teens, retreats, reconciliation, Eucharistic Adoration and time spent with your sponsor.

The church expects that through "the sacrament of Confirmation, the baptized are more perfectly bound to the church and are enriching with a special strength on the Holy Spirit. Hence they are, as true witnesses of Christ, more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed." (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1285)

Who should seek Confirmation and Why?

If we confirmed all children at age seven, most of the responsibility for presenting them for the sacrament would be the parents or godparents. However, because we confirm in the teenage years, it is much more important for every candidate to be a willing participant with a personal commitment to fulfill the responsibilities of the preparation and the sacrament. Many young people are passing through a critical period of spiritual maturation. Youth are encouraged to consider the advice of their parents and parents are also encouraged to clearly explain why they value Confirmation and hope that their son or daughter will complete their initiation as a Catholic. Parents are also encouraged to enter into a spiritual renewal of their faith at the same time. This can be done in an adult program, or activities for parents and candidates can be suggested by the Youth Ministry Office. Always parents should model with their lives the way of life they hope their children will choose as confirmed Christians. The Confirmation process incorporates a parent component to provide an opportunity for discussion and to foster the relationship between teen and parent.



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What about guilt, doubts, disagreement with the church's teachings?

Some sincerely desire Confirmation, but feel guilty or unworthy. However, no one is perfect in the eyes of God, and all are asked to receive the sacrament of penance before Confirmation. Those struggling with weakness should seek and pray for special strength from God through penance and Confirmation for that is their purpose.

Some have doubts about their faith or think they disagree with church teachings. Should they consider Confirmation? Definitely! Through the preparation process many questions will be answered. Often doubt comes from not knowing, from not having experienced enough. Disagreement with the church teaching is as ancient as the first apostles who argued at times among themselves. Confirmation permits you to clearly understand the teachings. As we take the time to seek the truth, we often find that much of our disagreements are based on misunderstanding. In this country especially, the news media and anti-catholic groups tend to distort or misrepresent church teaching or practice. This is why it is so important for every Catholic to take the time to learn their faith for themselves.

Some believe that faith in God is only a private personal matter. Others isolate themselves from others out of fear or prejudice. The Catholic Church is unique in its openness to all human beings. Therefore the church calls all preparing for Confirmation to "awaken to a sense of belonging to the church of Jesus Christ, the universal church as well as the parish community." (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1309) For this reason, this preparation takes place as a community of believers, seeking to deepen the presence of God in their lives together, much as the disciples waited for the first coming of the Holy Spirit in a community together.

What you should expect?

An experience of being with a group of people that may someday be your best friends—sharing fun times, learning, caring, facing yourself, facing others, looking at God, exploring the message of Jesus Christ, trying to become fully alive. Many people find themselves challenged to grow in ways they have never grown before. Almost all who have completed their preparation have considered the experience worthwhile.

What are the basic goals of the program?

Following the ancient division of human relationships, the candidates will explore their relationship to themselves, to God, to others and to all Creation within the context of the Roman Catholic faith. Since our primary goal is initiation, we cannot approach the depth required for a complete maturity of the faith. The candidates are encouraged along with all adults in the church to conscientiously continue to seek opportunities for spiritual growth and formation.



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What if I don't have enough time, have other priorities, sports or activities?

Without apology Jesus asked all those who wished to follow him to change their priorities in order to serve God's kingdom in their life. He warned people to take inventory of their life before they made the commitment to follow him. (Luke 14:25-33) Peter and his brother walked away from their father and the fishing business. Millions throughout history have made similar commitments. But Jesus promised that the commitment was worthwhile, the reward immense. (Luke 18:28-30) Many in this process have given up income, sports teams, and tournaments, and many other worthwhile activities and felt rewarded by their choice.

In most cases, we provide multiple sessions in hopes to provide an option for everyone. But the bottom line is that if you don't commit yourself and your time, if you don't make this a priority, you will receive little in return. It is better to wait until you can make this a priority, than to cheat your own experience with a poor commitment.

What is asked to be confirmed?

You are asked to attend mass, all required classes, service projects, retreats or conference, arriving on time, and all paperwork submitted. One outcome the church expects of Confirmation is for you to attend Sunday mass every week. During Confirmation preparation, you are asked to be fully present when coming for classes and retreats. You are also asked to fully participate in the Mass, the Eucharistic celebration. This is an opportunity to deepen your faith and come into full understanding of who you are receiving each Sunday. From that, you might ask yourself, am I prepared to receive the Body and Blood of the one who died for my sins? I encourage you to take full advantage of what is being offered to you through this Confirmation process. Most especially, you must strive to live a life that is worthy of the gospel you intend to profess, not only at church, but every day.

Mass is the central and most important prayer of the Church. Families and their children must attend Mass on Saturday evening or Sunday on a weekly basis.

What is asked of the parents?

Ideally, the parents will have supported their son or daughter's faith life for years by personal example, instruction, and regular involvement in a community of faith. During the process it will be important for the parents to continue to provide the necessary support so the candidate can carry out the commitments as of them. Parents are asked to pray for their child, and encouraged to enter into some form of personal renewal themselves. We will provide opportunities for the parents to participate in the process by required attendance for specific classes during the process.



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What is the attendance policy?

We want our program to be the best possible experience of faith in the Catholic Church. Each aspect of the program is critical to experiencing faith in the community. In order for each candidate to fulfill the diocesan and parish requirements for the reception of the sacrament of Confirmation, here is the current attendance policy.

EDGE Program (7th & 8th Grade) and Chosen: RCIT/Sacrament Preparation

The expectation is that teens will attend all classes scheduled. If an absence occurs due to sickness or emergencies, make-up work will need to be completed. Please contact Avery Utz at autz@stmatthewcatholic.org if you have any questions about EDGE make-up work or Adrian Quintero at aquintero@stmatthewcatholic.org if you have questions about RCIT make-up work. It will be the responsibility of the parent to review the lesson with their teen and the teen will need to complete the questions included with the lesson. Once make-up work is completed, they will turn into their catechist to be recorded as complete. We do not allow for late arrivals and early dismissals unless it is for an emergency. If a conflict arises where your teen needs to change sessions, then we will try to reassign them to a different session to accommodate the conflict. PLEASE notify us in advance to have your teen reassigned due to the schedule conflict.

In addition to the twice-a-month classes for EDGE, teens are expected to attend a minimum of three opportunities during the year that are offered by the parish or youth ministry which could include Xtreme Edge, Virtue Groups, Family Connection events, etc.

Why is confidentiality important in the group?

As with all groups where people share their lives spiritually, all candidates are asked to protect the confidence of others that are shared in the various aspects of the program. Our spirituality goes to the heart of who we are, where we are most vulnerable, therefore love dictates that we protect one another and never abuse our intimate knowledge of others.

What about a Confirmation name?

Many people, following an old custom, choose a new name at Confirmation. Often this name signifies a spiritual rebirth or recommitment and is the name of a saint that the candidate wishes to have as a model to inspire them. Names of recognized saints by the Catholic Church are chosen as the Confirmation name. An essay will be completed with information about the saint, the feast day of the saint and why you chose the name of that particular saint.



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What about sponsors?

The role of the sponsor is an ancient one. The sponsor is identical to the godparent at baptism because the two sacraments are intimately connected. **Parents are not allowed to be sponsors due to canon law, because by definition, sponsors should be members of the Christian community supporting the parents in fostering faith in their children.**

While the baptismal sponsor should be the first one considered for Confirmation, there may be very good reasons for selecting another. As a teen, the candidates have the solemn responsibility to choose a sponsor for themselves. The baptismal sponsor may be unavailable because of distance, death, or unfamiliarity to the candidate.

The sponsor needs to be a practicing Catholic, in good standing with the church, who has received Baptism, Confirmation, and First Holy Communion. The sponsor must also be at least 16 years old. Only one sponsor may be chosen.

Ideally, the sponsor should be a person older than the candidate who has spiritual maturity and with whom the candidate feels comfortable developing a relationship. It is also ideal that the sponsor is living in the area so that they can easily be a part of the candidate's process and the Confirmation celebration. Ideal sponsors may be people that you respect in the congregation or who serve in some ministry within the church.

Some candidates wish to ask an outstanding Christian friend from a non-Roman Catholic faith tradition to serve along with a sponsor as a witness to their Confirmation. It is a blessing to have other people of Christian faith be a model of faith but the sponsor must fulfill all requirements mentioned above.

Will my candidate have to participate in service projects?

Each candidate is required to participate in 3 service projects during their confirmation process. Two individual service projects and one small group service project. The individual service projects should consist of one parish service opportunity and one community service opportunity. The small group service project will be decided on as a small group with the adult leader. We will advertise service opportunities offered through the parish on the website and bulletin.

The Service Project Form will be available on our website at www.stmatthewcatholic.org.



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Will my candidate attend a retreat as part of the process?

Retreats and Conferences are important components of our confirmation process and are a highlight for the youth. They give our youth an opportunity to follow the example of the Apostles (Acts 2:42). We ask that you make the retreat/conference a priority and plan to have your child attend, as this is part of the requirements of our confirmation process. When asking teens who have attended a retreat even after sacrificing another commitment, they have said it was the best decision they made.

When will the Confirmation Mass be held?

The Bishop's office determines the dates for confirmation. We understand that family and friends need advance notice for planning purposes, we will let parents know as soon as we have dates. Currently, we plan to have confirmation in the Spring 2020.

What paperwork will we need to submit?

All paperwork will be available at www.stmatthewcatholic.org.

- Copy of Baptismal Certificate
- Sponsor Agreement and Eligibility Form
- Confirmation Saint Name Essay
- Service Project Form

What can my teen get involved in after Confirmation?

St. Matthew Catholic Church offers a number of opportunities for your teen to continue to be active in the parish. One of the effects of Confirmation is to be more connected to the Body of Christ, the Church. We invite those who have been confirmed to be initiated into the high school youth ministry, to serve as teen catechists with faith formation, peer mentors for EDGE and retreats, to volunteer for our Vacation Bible School, and through liturgical ministries such as greeters, altar servers, lectors, and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. Being a fully initiated Catholic is to live a life of community, a life of prayer, a life of grace through the sacraments, and to be a witness to others through sharing the Catholic faith and service.



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What do I think about Confirmation?

Please read previous pages and complete following questions, be thoughtful and honest in your responses.

FOR TEEN:

1. What does Confirmation mean to you?

2. Why are you seeking to be confirmed?

3. What are you looking forward to during the Confirmation process?

4. Do you have any reservations about the Confirmation process or being confirmed?

- I have read and understand the information outlined in this Confirmation Overview. I commit to the expectations and requirements of the Confirmation process at St. Matthew Catholic Church.

Teen's Signature: _____



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What do I think about Confirmation?

Please read previous pages and complete following questions, be thoughtful and honest in your responses.

FOR PARENT:

1. What does Confirmation mean to you?

2. Why are you seeking for your teen in being confirmed?

3. What are you looking forward to during the Confirmation process for yourself and your teen?

4. What are some of the reservations you have about the Confirmation process?

- I have read and understand the information outlined in this Confirmation Overview. I commit to the expectations and requirements of the Confirmation process at St. Matthew Catholic Church through participation, encouragement, support and being an example of faith for my teen.

Parent's Signature: _____