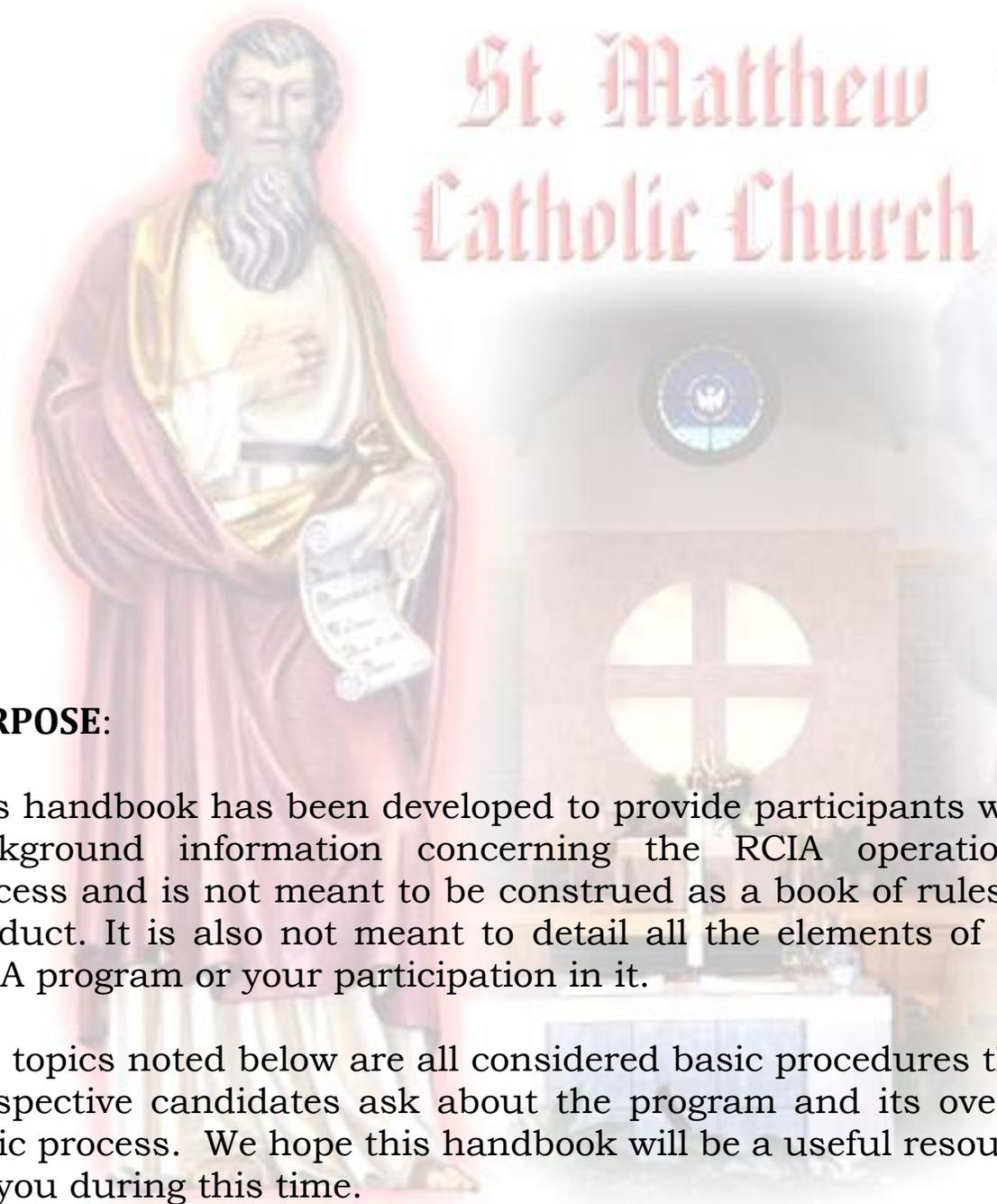


RCIA Handbook



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 the RCIA program or your participation in it.

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:

Catechumens

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."

Candidates for Full Communion with the Catholic Church

A validly baptized person who received a valid baptism in another Church or ecclesial communion who is interested in being received into full communion with the Catholic Church. Candidates for full communion will be receiving both the sacrament of Confirmation and first Holy Communion at the Easter Vigil service.

Baptized Catholic Seeking Instruction and One or More Sacraments of Initiation

A person baptized in the Catholic Church who is interested in completing the sacraments of Initiation. This involves those who will be receiving the sacrament of Confirmation and/or Holy Communion for the first time at the Easter Vigil.

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. These

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interviews should be conducted before the end of January. More information will be available as the time to schedule interviews approaches.

BAPTISMAL VERIFICATION:

As noted above, the Catholic Church recognizes baptisms performed by other Christian faith communities performing a “Trinitarian” Baptismal ceremony, and each Candidate is required to provide evidence of their baptism. When possible, a Baptismal Certificate noting the location and date of your Baptism issued by the church where you were baptized is the preferred means. If your church is unable to provide a Baptismal certificate, a letter from a church official attesting to the baptism, and in certain circumstances, written statements from witnesses attesting to the baptism can substitute for the form. 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, a person on whose prayers you may depend, and an encouragement.

For Catechumens, the sponsor will also serve as your Godparent. A spouse may not be your Godparent and, in general, we do not encourage the selection of your spouse or significant other, as your sponsor. 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 Rachel Willoughby 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. You will be able to meet them at the sessions on a voluntary basis.

“It is a very ancient custom of the Church that adults are not admitted to baptism without godparents, members of the Christian community who will assist the candidates at least in the final preparation for baptism and after baptism will help them persevere in the faith and in their lives as Christians.”

(Christian Initiation, General Introduction, Congregation for Divine Worship, paragraph 8)

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. Each participant is asked to prepare a short paper about the saint and why they chose that individual to be their patron saint. There are several sources of information about the lives of saints available at the library, book stores, and online.

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.

RITE OF ACCEPTANCE

The Rite of Acceptance will occur at St. Matthew on the scheduled dates.

“Assembling publicly for the first time, the candidates who have completed the period of the precatechumenate declare their intention to the Church and the Church in turn, carrying out its apostolic mission, accepts them as persons who intend to become its members. God showers his grace on the candidates, since the celebration manifests their desire publicly and marks their reception and first consecration by the Church.”

(Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, paragraph 41)

RITE OF ELECTION

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.

“[This rite] closes the period of the catechumenate proper, that is, the lengthy period of formation of the catechumens’ minds and hearts. The celebration of the rite of election, which usually coincides with the opening of Lent, also marks the beginning of the period of final, more intense preparation for the sacraments of initiation, during which the elect will be encouraged to follow Christ with greater generosity.

“At this second step, on the basis of the testimony of godparents and catechists and of the catechumens’ reaffirmation of their intention, the Church judges their state of readiness and decides on their advancement toward the sacraments of initiation. Thus the Church makes its “election,” that is, the choice and admission of those catechumens who have the dispositions that

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make them fit to take part, at the next major celebration, in the sacraments of initiation.

“This step is called election because the acceptance made by the Church is founded on the election by God, in whose name the Church acts.”

(Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, paragraphs 118-119)

RECEPTION INTO THE CHURCH (USUALLY) AT THE EASTER VIGIL

“The third step in the Christian initiation of adults is the celebration of the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and eucharist. Through this final step the elect, receiving pardon for their sins, are admitted into the people of God.

They are graced with adoption as children of God and are led by the Holy Spirit into the promised fullness of time begun in Christ and, as they share in the Eucharistic sacrifice and meal, even to a foretaste of the kingdom of God.”

(Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, paragraph 206)

If you are ready, at the Easter Vigil you will receive the sacraments necessary to enter into full communion with the Catholic Church. If you have yet to be baptized, this means that you will receive Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Communion at the Easter Vigil.

If you are already baptized, you will receive Confirmation and Holy Communion. Prior to the Easter Vigil, you will receive the sacrament of Reconciliation to prepare for the reception of the sacraments Confirmation and Holy Communion.

COURSE MATERIALS

For the 2020-2021 RCIA program, we plan to use the Symbolon course, available to all through [Formed.org](https://www.formed.org). We also plan to meet in person. See the schedule on the [website](#), to see exact dates and times.

As with everything this year, there are many factors that lead to unpredictability and thus require flexibility. We hope that everything will follow the schedule we have outlined, but we understand that we may have to adapt to changing circumstances.

ACCESSING AND USING FORMED

To register for Formed.org follow the steps below:

1. Go to [formed.org/signup](https://www.formed.org/signup)
2. Select your parish by entering name, city and/or zip code
3. Register with your name and email address
4. Check that email account for a link to begin using FORMED

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You do not create a username or password. When you want to sign on to Formed and watch a video, you can go to Formed.org and login using just your email address.

CONTACT AND COMMUNICATIONS:

If you have any questions, please email Rachel Willoughby at rachelw@stmatthewcatholic.org.

We will be using Flocknote to communicate and send group emails for the 2020-2021 year. Please add Flocknote to your approved email list, if necessary, to ensure that you receive communications from St. Matthew.

OUTLINE FOR CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS

PERIOD OF EVANGELIZATION AND PRECATECHUMENATE

This is a time, of no fixed duration or structure, for inquiry and introduction to Gospel values, an opportunity for the beginnings of faith.

FIRST STEP: ACCEPTANCE INTO THE ORDER OF CATECHUMENS

This is the liturgical rite, usually celebrated on some annual date or dates, marking the beginning of the catechumenate proper, as the candidates express and the Church accepts their intention to respond to God's call to follow the way of Christ.

PERIOD OF THE CATECHUMENATE

This is the time, in duration corresponding to the progress of the individual, for the nurturing and growth of the catechumens' faith and conversion to God; celebrations of the word and prayers of exorcism and blessing are meant to assist the process.

SECOND STEP: ELECTION OR ENROLLMENT OF NAMES

This is the liturgical rite, usually celebrated on the First Sunday of Lent by which the Church formally ratifies the catechumens' readiness for the sacraments of initiation and the catechumens, now the elect, express the will to receive these sacraments.

PERIOD OF PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

This is the time immediately preceding the elects' initiation, usually the Lenten season preceding the celebration of this initiation at the Easter Vigil; it is a time of reflection, intensely centered on conversion, marked by celebration of the scrutinies and presentations and of the preparation rites on Holy Saturday.

THIRD STEP: CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

This is the liturgical rite, usually integrated into the Easter Vigil, by which the elect are initiated through baptism, confirmation and the eucharist.

PERIOD OF POSTBAPTISMAL CATECHESIS OR MYSTAGOGY

This is the time, usually the Easter season, following the celebration of initiation, during which the newly initiated experience being fully a part of the Christian community by means of pertinent catechesis and particularly by participation with all the faithful in the Sunday Eucharistic celebration.

(Taken from the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, Study Edition, p. 14)