

Confirmation Preparation

A GUIDEBOOK FOR CONFIRMATION CANDIDATES AND PARENTS

**St. Bartholomew, St. Joseph, and St. Stephen Catholic
Churches**

“...that their hearts may be encouraged as they are brought together in love, to have all the richness of fully assured understanding, for the knowledge of the mystery of God, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

Col 2, 2-3



INTRODUCTION

Welcome! We are looking forward to sharing with you this journey of faith as you prepare to receive the sacrament of Confirmation. As you will see, Confirmation preparation involves learning, sharing, serving, fellowship, spiritual growth and fun! You will be given the opportunity to learn more about your Catholic faith and what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Confirmation is the Sacrament in which one is enriched by the gift of the Holy Spirit and bound more perfectly to the Church. It strengthens us and obliges us to be witnesses to Christ by word and deed and to spread and defend the faith. It is the Sacrament in which one enters into full membership in the Catholic Church.

Confirmation perfects Baptismal grace; it is the sacrament which gives us the Holy Spirit in order to root us more deeply as children of God, incorporate us more firmly into Christ, strengthen our bond with the Church, associate us more closely with her mission, and help us to bear witness to the Christian faith in words accompanied by deeds.

Confirmation, like Baptism, imprints a spiritual mark or indelible character on the Christian soul; for this reason one can receive this sacrament only once.

A Christian does not live as a child of God through his or her own efforts alone, but through the grace of God. We see this in a practical way when we look back on our own lives and the lives of others, even the lives of saints. Therefore, it is our duty to seek the grace that God offers us in order to live our lives as Christians in the way that God intends.

WHO MAY BE CONFIRMED?

Confirmation candidates:

- *are between the ages of thirteen and eighteen
- *have received the sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation, and Eucharist.
- *are practicing their faith
- *are in the state of grace
- *demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the responsibilities of a member of the Catholic Church
- *are aware of the initiation aspect of the Sacrament of Confirmation and be committed to continuing the faithful practice and study of their religion
- *have a sincere desire to receive the sacrament** as well as an appreciation of sacramental life.
- *register with their parish for the sacrament of Confirmation (Religious Education registration form)**

CONFIRMATION CANDIDATE EXPECTATIONS- at a glance

- Participate in weekly Mass
- Participate in classes
- choose a qualified sponsor and meet regularly with him/her.
- write a letter of intent
- choose a saint's name as your Confirmation name and write a biography about that saint.
- participate in Rite of Commitment Mass in September.
- participate in the sponsor/candidate meeting
- participate in Confirmation retreat
- be regularly involved in social justice activities
- perform or attend at least one additional spiritual activity.
- write a letter to the Bishop.
- participate in the Confirmation rehearsal.
- participate in the Confirmation liturgy!

EXPECTATIONS IN DETAIL

The following explains each of the Confirmation expectations in detail and in some cases, the reasons the requirements are important to the formation of the candidate. Please remember that while in many cases we list a minimum requirement for Confirmation, the candidates should be encouraged to make many of these activities a regular part of their religious practices.

Participate in Mass on Saturday evening or Sunday each week

The Confirmation candidate and his or her parents (along with the rest of the family) must have a sincere intention of participating in Mass every week. Participating in the Eucharistic life of the community is both a privilege and an obligation of Confirmed Catholics. This is also an important way that parents demonstrate to their children the importance they place on the faith they are handing on to their children. Worshipping as a community we build up the Body of Christ. If your family has not been attending Mass regularly in the past, we are confident that by doing so you will notice many benefits by the time Confirmation approaches.

Participate in Confirmation classes

Attendance at the Confirmation classes is extremely important in preparing the candidates for reception of the sacrament. When a class is missed, the candidate loses time for fellowship and prayer as well as the material covered that day. We expect that you will make these gatherings a priority and therefore make a sincere effort to adjust your other obligations accordingly. Students are expected to be prepared for the classes, which includes completing any assigned readings or homework. Contact your catechist immediately if critical circumstances will not allow you to attend a class. The catechist will determine an appropriate at-home assignment so that he/she doesn't fall behind in the lessons. Excessive absenteeism can affect the candidate's ability to enter fully into this important period of preparation.

Choose a qualified sponsor and meet regularly with your sponsor

The confirmation sponsor should be a person who has been a strong role- model as a faith-filled Catholic. This person will be a companion in your faith journey and will vouch for your readiness to receive the sacrament.

The sponsor should therefore be able to meet regularly with the candidate, spend time building a bond with the teen, help him/her prepare for the sacrament through prayer, study, service and discussion and be in physical attendance at the rehearsal and the confirmation. Attendance by proxy is allowed in certain situations, such as the sponsor living out-of-town and being unable to travel to the celebration. Requests for proxy should be directed to the Coordinator of Youth Ministry.

The sponsor:

- ❖ must be a practicing Roman Catholic who attends Mass regularly (Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation) and is living according to the teachings of the Catholic Church.
- ❖ supports the person to be confirmed in their commitment to a Christian life
- ❖ must know the candidate and be willing to serve as a strong and long-lasting Christian influence on the candidate
- ❖ must be fully initiated themselves, having received Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist
- ❖ must submit a verification of Confirmation (a copy of their Confirmation certificate or a letter from the parish where the sponsor was Confirmed.)
- ❖ should be sufficiently mature in their own faith commitment
- ❖ may be either male or female for any candidate
- ❖ may assist the candidate in choosing and carrying out the candidate's service project commitment
- ❖ must be reasonably informed on current church teachings
- ❖ may accompany the candidate to special liturgies and preparation programs
- ❖ may not be the parents of the candidate
- ❖ assists in determining the candidate's readiness for the sacrament
- ❖ presents the candidate to the minister of Confirmation

Preference is given to the candidate's Godparents, which most fully expresses the integral connection between Baptism and Confirmation. If you are using a proxy sponsor, he/she must also meet the above criteria

Along with this guide you will find a *Confirmation Sponsor Information Form*. **This form is due back at the time of the sponsor/candidate meeting in September.**

Write a Letter of Intent

Each candidate must write a letter of intent, addressed to the **Pastor, Fr. Al Burkhardt or Fr. John Potaczek, and the Coordinator of Youth Ministry, Miss Megan Moss**. The purpose of this letter is for the candidate to demonstrate in writing his/her desire to be Confirmed, and willingness to make this commitment. Please use the following as a guide for the letter:

First- begin with your greeting: Dear Father Burkhardt/Father Potaczek and Miss Moss,

Second- Introduce yourself and share some information about yourself, such as your family, your interests and hobbies, and a little about your background.

Third- state that you would like to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation and explain (in one or two paragraphs) why you want to be confirmed. It may help you to think about a) the ways in which this sacrament will strengthen your relationship with Jesus, b) the role of faith in your life, c) what it means to you to be a part of our parish community and/or d) how the Holy Spirit empowered the apostles to be witnesses for Jesus (read and reflect on the *Acts of the Apostles*.)

Fourth- conclude your letter with a quotation from Scripture which will serve as your inspiration during your preparation for Confirmation. This can be a sentence or a few sentences. Include an explanation as to why you chose this passage.

This letter must be turned in by the sponsor/candidate meeting in September.



Choose a Confirmation name and write a biography about that saint

In both the Old and New Testament, when God had a new mission for someone, He often gave them a new name. Even without a new name, your name has always told others who you are.

God calls on each of us to fulfill a special mission. It may be converting non-

believers, helping the poor, being a peacemaker or one of many other callings. Confirmation may be the continuation of a mission you began at Baptism, or the beginning of a new mission.

Therefore there are two options when deciding on a Confirmation name:

First- Because Confirmation is the strengthening of the work that God began in your life at your Baptism, it is recommended that you give first preference to using your Baptismal name for Confirmation. This shows the integral link between Baptism and Confirmation (note: this applies only if your Baptismal name was a Saint's name.)

Second- Perhaps you see Confirmation as the beginning of a new mission for you and a fresh beginning in your faith journey. Then you may choose a new name for Confirmation. Your Confirmation name should be that of a saint you admire or the saint name of someone you know and look up to as a Christian role-model.

There are many helpful websites available to assist you in gathering information about the saints. Just a few are:

www.catholicforum.com/saints
www.catholic.org/saints
www.catholic-pages.com/dir/saints.asp
www.theworkofgod.org/saints

Once the candidate has chosen his/her Confirmation name, they must complete a biography of that saint using the form found with this guide.

The saint biography is due to the Religious Education Office by December 8th- the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, and the halfway point in this pre-Confirmation year.

Participate in the Rite of Commitment Mass

All candidates, parents and if available, sponsors should plan to attend the Rite of Commitment, celebrated at the candidate's parish in the autumn. The exact date will be posted in the finalized schedule. During the Mass the candidates will declare their intent to seek the Sacrament of Confirmation with the parish community as witness. In return the community agrees to support and pray for all those involved in this faith journey.

Participate in Sponsor/Candidate meeting

The candidate and his or her sponsor must attend a meeting together in the afternoon of the Rite of Commitment Mass. The purpose of the meeting is to bring the candidate and sponsor together to begin their mission and begin to build their bond as partners in faith. We will go over expectations and give suggestions for topics of conversation as well as ideas for service projects.

Participate in the Confirmation retreat

Retreats provide a unique opportunity for the candidates to spend an extended time in discernment and reflect on the gifts of the Spirit and reflect on their relationship with God and their faith life. It is therefore required that each candidate attend at least the Confirmation retreat hosted by the parishes in their Confirmation year.

Be regularly involved in social justice activities

An awareness of the importance of and vital need for performing service to others is critical in preparing the candidates for Confirmation. Throughout Scripture we are called to love our neighbor and stand up for justice and peace. Since service and justice are so important to who we are as Catholic Christians, we ask that the candidates make his/her service projects a priority. Serving others is not something we do "to get it over with". It is something we do because we recognize the presence of Jesus in all persons and in all of God's creation. Therefore it is encouraged that the candidates get involved in a new service activity which is an ongoing and a regular commitment.

Some things to think about when considering your service are:

- What are people's needs or problems and what can I do to help?
- Who needs time, effort, work or service from me?
- What unique gifts or talents has God given me that can be used to serve others?

Once you identify where service is needed, make specific plans and follow through with those commitments.

"You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself. He replied to him, 'You have answered correctly; do this and you will live.'" (Lk. 10: 27-28)

There are many, many opportunities to serve at the church and in the community. Just a few examples are:

- *Be an aide for Religious Education
- *Assist with Liturgy of the Word for Children at Sunday Mass (St. Joseph)
- *Assist with Wee Worship (St. Joseph)
- *Join the parish Lector, Usher/Greeter, Altar Server ministries

Other opportunities will be listed in the monthly newsletter and the parish bulletin. (Please read the bulletin every week as it provides you important information.)

Participate in at least one additional spiritual activity that is new to you

Spending time in prayer and reflection does not end when we leave the church on Sunday. It is so important for the candidates to become aware of the many opportunities that are available for them to meditate, celebrate and further their relationship with God.

The following is a partial list of spiritual activities:

Attend daily Mass

Participate in Advent and/or Lenten preparations

Participate in a Christmas pageant, Living Stations of the Cross, Shadow Stations

Participate in the Triduum services- Holy Thursday, Good Friday, or Easter Vigil

Attend Adoration or Reconciliation on a regular basis

Reflect on Scripture- in your journal for three minutes each Sunday

Pray the Rosary

Participate in Bible study

Although the minimum requirement is to participate in one of these activities, we sincerely hope the candidate and his or her family will have an active and ongoing spiritual life!

“Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you” -James, 4, 8

Write a letter to the Bishop

It has been customary for the Bishop to request that each candidate write a personal letter to him requesting Confirmation. The students will be given more information about this letter as Confirmation approaches. This letter will be due in March of 2009. Please consult the finalized schedule for the exact date.



Attend Confirmation Rehearsal

All candidates and their sponsors (or a proxy) **must** attend the Confirmation rehearsal which is typically the Wednesday before Confirmation. The sponsors will also give witness to the candidates at this time.

Participate in the Liturgy and Rite of Confirmation

Confirmation will be in the spring of 2009. The exact date will be announced.



“All-powerful God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, by water and the Holy Spirit you freed your sons and daughters from sin and gave them new life. Send your Holy Spirit upon them to be their Helper and Guide. Give them the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of right judgment and courage, the spirit of knowledge and reverence. Fill them with the spirit of wonder and awe in your presence.” -Rite of Confirmation 25

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS

“As the primary educators of their children: parents are to be intimately involved in the catechesis for Confirmation. This will help them renew and strengthen their own faith, besides enabling them to set a better example for their children.”(NCD, no. 119)

Because parents:

Are the primary educators of their children

Are responsible for initiating their children into the sacramental life

Serve as models for their child by being committed Christians

Parents should expect to:

- Worship with your families regularly
- Be actively involved in the Confirmation preparation of the candidate.
- Engage in discussions about the material being studied including sharing your understanding and perspective.
- Encourage your child to reflect and thoughtfully consider the decision to receive the sacrament of Confirmation.
- Pray for your child's spiritual growth every day.
- Support and encourage completion of assignments, activities and expectations.
- Emphasize the importance of the sacrament of Confirmation by taking an active part in the celebration of Confirmation.
- Assist in retreats, service work, meetings, classes, spiritual events and social events.
- Faithfully bring your teen (and when necessary yourself) to meetings, programs, and prayer services that are planned to help your child prepare for the sacrament of Confirmation