

St. Joseph Parish
CONFIRMATION HANDBOOK
2017



On behalf of the faith community of St. Joseph Parish, we invite you to participate in this year's Confirmation Preparation Program. The purpose of the program is to assist you on your faith journey and to help prepare you for full membership in the Catholic Church. It is our hope that through this time of preparation you will freely desire the Sacrament of Confirmation and that you will commit yourself to follow the life of Christ, serving the needs of others in our parish and community.

The key elements in preparation for the celebration of Confirmation are:

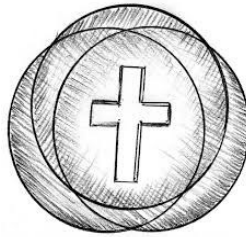
DISCERNMENT: What does it mean to say that I'm ready to accept and live a Christian Catholic lifestyle?

COMMUNITY: Am I an active part of my faith community?

CHRISTIAN MESSAGE: Are scripture and reflection important parts of my everyday life?

WORSHIP: Do I participate actively in liturgy and prayer?

SERVICE: Am I using my gifts and talents for the benefit of others?



REQUIREMENTS FOR CONFIRMATION CANDIDATE

- ☐ The Confirmation Program is open to all who are Juniors or Seniors in high school and will be at least 16 years of age prior to the celebration of Confirmation.
- ☐ A Candidate must be a baptized Catholic or have been received into the Catholic Church.
- ☐ A copy of the Candidate's Baptismal certificate must be on file. If the Candidate was *not* baptized at St Joseph Parish, please provide a copy of your Baptismal Certificate.
- ☐ A Candidate must attend a Confirmation Retreat. Retreats provide an opportunity for prayer, reflection, friendship, and relaxation.

DETERMINING READINESS

Readiness for celebrating a sacrament cannot be determined simply by the calendar. The meaning of the Rite for those celebrating it and its total impact on their faith-lives will be strongly affected by many factors besides age: the maturity of the candidates, the depth of their faith development, the degree of their commitment to Christ and to the faith-community, the level of their awareness of their religious realities, the extent of their involvement in community worship and service, and their knowledge and understanding of the basic teachings of the Church.

Because Confirmation celebrates the response of the individual to the gift of faith, **the primary responsibility for determining when the candidate is ready for the sacrament lies within the individual candidates themselves.** Because Confirmation is a sacrament of initiation, the decision is to be made in dialogue with the whole community; nevertheless, the community must show its support, welcome the initiates, and sustain them in their decision so that it will be truly free.

It may well happen that a candidate will not feel ready to be confirmed. It is important that the candidate then does not feel somehow ostracized from the Catholic community or forgotten. That very important moment requires, on the part of the community and its representatives, understanding and support and continued contact with those making a decision to postpone Confirmation.





THE PARENT'S ROLE

"As the primary educators of their children, parents along with sponsors are to be intimately involved in catechesis for Confirmation. This will help them renew and strengthen their own faith, besides enabling them to set a better example for their children (National Catechetical Directory, no. 119) ."

Parents play a unique role in Confirmation preparation. For many years they have led their children through special moments of faith growth. While continuing to lead by the example of their own lives, parents now face the added challenge of granting their son or daughter a free choice in the decision to be confirmed.

Parents can help their children in the following ways:

- ☐ Assisting their son or daughter in determining readiness.
- ☐ Respecting the decision their son or daughter makes.

Parents may **not** act as sponsors (Canon Law #874) because:

- 1) The sponsor is seen as someone who shares with the parents in their obligation to bring up their child in the faith, especially in the event the parents are unable to perform this function.*
- 2) The sponsor represents the larger church - the entire community of believers.*

However, a parent may act as a proxy and present their son or daughter to the Bishop for Confirmation, if the Confirmation Sponsor cannot attend the Confirmation Mass.



THE SPONSOR'S ROLE

"The sponsor presents the Candidate to the minister for the anointing, and will later help the Candidate fulfill the baptismal promises faithfully under the influence of the Holy Spirit (excerpt from the Introduction to the Rite of Confirmation)."

The support of the entire community is focused through the sponsor chosen by the Confirmation Candidate. Godparents at Baptism can be sponsors at Confirmation. In this way, the relationship between Baptism and Confirmation is retained.

A sponsor must:

- Belong to the Catholic Church and have been initiated into the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist, and must not be prohibited by law from exercising the role of sponsor.
- Support the Candidate in the desire to believe in Jesus Christ and to live out that belief in his or her daily life.
- Pray with the Candidate, and to encourage the Candidate on his/her journey of faith.
- Be willing to challenge the Candidate on un-Christian attitudes or actions when necessary.
- Participate regularly in the celebration of the Mass and of the sacraments.
- Be at least 16 years of age.

CONFIRMATION NAME

The Archdiocese of Milwaukee requires Confirmation candidates to choose a Confirmation name. Candidates may use their baptismal name or another Christian name when receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation. A Christian name would be the name of a saint or blessed. Derivatives of names (Kelly for Catherine; Jenna for Genevieve) are also appropriate. Candidates may use their first or second names if they are Christian names, or they may select a new Christian name. The candidate should know the relationship of the name to the religious Christian tradition. Exceptions can be made if a particular non-Christian or family name has significant meaning for a candidate; however, candidates must be able to explain this significance in their faith life to the Bishop in their letter and be prepared to explain their choice when being confirmed. Most importantly, candidates should be encouraged to learn about their patron as part of their preparation for the sacrament and should particularly focus on the virtues of the patron whom they wish to emulate.

SERVICE

The experience of Christian community flows naturally to service. Christ gives His people different gifts not only for themselves, but also for others. Each must serve the other for the good of all. It is important, also, that you as Confirmation candidates see that these service experiences are not simply requirements to be confirmed but are our response to Christ's action and initiative in our lives. As such, Christian service means more than just spending time doing a task. It involves prayer and reflection. Thus, we are asking you to complete at least one service project with your Sponsor (or proxy) and reflect on this activity.



CONFIRMATION RETREAT

The Confirmation Retreat is a very important aspect of the Confirmation Program. Perhaps one of the best ways to understand the importance of the retreat is to look at how it is modeled in the life of Jesus. In Scripture we see time and again that whenever Jesus had an important decision to make or a challenge to face, he went away in quiet for awhile to gather his courage, regain his perspective and to be strengthened by his unity with the Father (MT 4, LK 5:16, MK 6). While the modern day retreat experience may differ from Jesus' style, the purpose remains the same. Over an extended period of time, away from schedules, tensions and a fast-paced life of activity, young people can get in touch with the deeper questions of life and find nourishment for their spiritual journey.

Attendance at a Confirmation retreat is an Archdiocesan requirement. If for some reason the candidate can not join us, arrangements must be made by the candidate to join a retreat from another parish. Please contact Sheri Hanson to discuss options.

LETTER OF INTENTION (aka Letter to the Bishop)

Each candidate is required to write a letter to the confirming Bishop or his representative. The purpose of this letter is to give the Bishop an opportunity to find out a little about each candidate beforehand. It also allows the candidates the chance to communicate personally with the Bishop about his or her feelings, background and hopes about the church. From our experience, the Bishops really do read all the letters.

REHEARSAL AND CEREMONY INFORMATION

The ceremony of Confirmation requires a brief rehearsal to ensure that it will run smoothly and meaningfully. All candidates and their sponsors are required to attend. The rehearsal will be right before the Mass in which Confirmation is celebrated.

CHECKLIST FOR CONFIRMATION 2017

- ☐ **Confirmation Retreat:** Saturday, February 18
- ☐ **Confirmation Candidate Form** due Sunday, March 5
- ☐ **Confirmation Name Worksheet** due Sunday, May 7
- ☐ **Letter of Intention to be Confirmed** due Sunday, May 7
- ☐ **Confirmation Sponsor Activity Worksheet** due Sunday, Aug. 27
- ☐ **Confirmation Blessing & Lunch:** 10:30am Mass Sunday, Sept. 10
- ☐ **Confirmation Rehearsal:** 2:30pm Saturday, October 21
- ☐ **Confirmation:** 4pm Mass, Saturday, October 21

Please consult the Confirmation calendar for other important events and deadlines.



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