

Confirmation Sponsor Role and Best Practices

A guide for Confirmation Sponsor, Parents, and Mentors

Congratulations: You are about to embark on a rewarding journey to share and grow in your own faith. In accepting the invitation to be a sponsor or mentor for your candidate, you are making a commitment to help him or her grow in his or her relationship with God and the Church. This is also an opportunity for you to renew and deepen your own faith.

This handout is designed to help you prepare your candidate for the Sacrament of Confirmation and to guide you in fruitful conversations with your candidate. The first part gives you background and tips about the program and process. The second part provides activities to do together after each of the sessions your candidate will attend.

Thank you for saying “yes” to your candidate, and remember the Holy Spirit is a present and constant companion as you journey together.

Understanding Your Role

Your role as a Confirmation sponsor is multifaceted. As you accompany your candidate throughout the preparation process, your role includes affirming the strengths of your candidate and pointing out ways he or she can grow and become better in the practice of faith. It may involve some guidance, teaching, and explanation of points brought up in the candidates’ sessions. Your candidate may look to you for examples of how to live a life of faith.

The role of a sponsor is one of companionship. Good sponsorship does not demand perfection. It flows from walking with the candidate, sharing your own faith story and experience, and listening to his or her story. You do not need to be an expert in adolescent psychology or the doctrines of the faith. Good sponsorship is based on your willingness to share your own experiences of being Catholic and growing in your relationship with God.

During the program you may:

- Participate in service projects with your candidate
- Spend time with your candidate doing the activities and dialogue that are found in this handout
- Share how life in the Church has been a part of your everyday life
- Listening to any and all questions your candidate has and seek understanding together

What is Confirmation

Introduction

The Sacrament of Confirmation celebrates an outpouring of the Holy Spirit and increases the gifts in us. These gifts give us the opportunity to be strong in professing our faith. Confirmation also completes baptismal grace. The Spirit has already been active in the Sacrament of Baptism. Confirmation strengthens our bonds with the Church and empowers us to witness. Just as the Apostle went forth fearlessly to proclaim the Good News after Pentecost, those who receive the Holy Spirit’s outpouring in Confirmation also become the bearers of glad tidings in word and deed. Young people who are baptized as infants celebrate Confirmation in the 8th grade in this diocese. When confirmation is celebrated it more fully binds the candidate to the Church and enriches him or her with the special strength of the Holy Spirit to witness to Christ as a **member of Christ’s body**.

Symbolism and History

The Sacrament of Confirmation was originally a rite of hand-laying and anointing with fragrant oil that immediately followed Baptism and “confirmed” it. This anointing was carried out by the bishop. As the young church grew and communities of Christians spread throughout the known world, the bishop was unable to be present at every Baptism, so changes were made to the Rite. In the Roman Rite, the hand laying and anointing were delayed until a later time when the bishop could carry them out in person. This was the origin of Confirmation as a separate sacramental celebration. In the Eastern Rite, the priest who baptized would anoint the newly baptized immediately.

Prayers

Prayer for your Candidate

Come Holy Spirit, enlighten [Name].
Open his/her heart to see the gift of your presence in all of life. Give [Name] wisdom, to make good choices, courage to stand up for the right things, and perseverance and fortitude to live as a disciple. Amen

Sponsor Prayer

Spirit of Wisdom, guide me on this journey that I may be a true witness to the Gospel of Jesus and the mission of the Church. Put your thoughts in my heart and your words in my mouth that I will fulfill this ministry with goodness, generosity, and grace. Amen

Sponsor Checklist

During the Preparation Program

- Determine with your candidate the times you will meet/talk for faith sharing after each session.
- Mark the date of the celebration of Confirmation in your calendar.
- Discuss the candidate’s saint reflection with them and whether they would like to reaffirm their baptismal name or choose a different saint’s name.
- Help them to reflect upon their service and terms of learning to live out their faith and grow in their faith.
- If possible, find service your candidate and you can do together.
- Reflect on what you would like to receive from this time
- Periodically attend Mass with your candidate and talk about the readings and homily afterwards.
- If you are involved in a parish ministry or group, invite your candidate to join you.

Preparing for the Day of Confirmation

- Within the week before the celebration of Confirmation, set aside some time to meet with your candidate and affirm his/her participation in the program. Share your own insights and lessons from the process.
- Be on time and in the appointed place for the celebration
- Find a gift that appropriately expresses the meaning of the event.
 - Meaningful gifts do not need to be expensive.

After the Celebration

When the formal process of Confirmation is over, you and your newly confirmed person may want to continue as faith companions. Here are some suggestions:

- Use email or phone to continue faith sharing and building your relationship.
- Continue or begin a new service project together.
- Remember and celebrate the anniversary of Confirmation.

Faith Sharing Tips

The best gifts your candidate can receive from you are the sharing of your own faith and affirming or calling forth of theirs, which in turn will also be a gift to you. Faith sharing encompasses talking about the beliefs, values, and meanings that shape your life because you are a believer and practicing Christian. You probably already do a lot of it in everyday conversation.

Principles of Faith Sharing

- ❖ Faith is a gift of God already present in you and your candidate.
- ❖ Faith grows as life happens
- ❖ Listening and sharing the events and experiences of our lives in a faith community helps us clarify and articulate our faith.
- ❖ Faith sharing happens in both formal and informal settings and benefits both the listener and the speaker.

Create the Environment for Faith Sharing

Think of yourself and your candidate as companions on the faith journey. Companions actively listen to and trust each other. They are going in the same direction. They assist each other with experience, skill, and sharing. They enjoy each other and the journey.

Reflect. Think about your own positive experiences of being companioned on a journey. What lessons from those experiences can you bring to your role as a sponsor that will create an environment for faith sharing?

Make the Time. Set aside specific times to talk and take advantage of informal and spontaneous times together.

Listen to the Small Stuff. Your candidate will share if he or she knows you are going to listen no matter what he or she wants to talk about, whether it is what is in the Confirmation session or everyday happenings and issues. Young people trust adults when they sense an adult is truly interested in them. If they come to trust you with the small stuff, they are more likely to trust you enough to talk about more serious matters.

Listen Between the Lines. Sometimes it's hard to talk about the things that really matter. Your candidate may want to, but cannot find the words. Pay special attention to what your candidate may be trying to say or ask.

Listen and Learn. Ask for your candidate's opinions. Few things please young people more than being asked their opinion.

Don't Interrupt. Give your candidate extra time to explain his or her opinions or desires, even if you think you know what he or she is going to say.

Don't Deliver a Sermon. Ask your candidate if he or she has heard opinions from friends or family members on a topic. When the candidate feels that you are exploring the topic together, he or she will be more open to sharing thoughts and listening to yours.

Holy Trinity Confirmation Program- Themes:

Mini-retreat: "You Are Mine"

- ❖ Recognize God's love for each of us.
- ❖ Explore our experience of the Holy Spirit
- ❖ Learn about the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- ❖ Learn about the 7 Gifts of the Holy Spirit and recognize how we can use them in our lives.

Session 1: "We are One Body"

- ❖ Learn more about the Holy Spirit and the history of the Church.
- ❖ Recognize the Holy Spirit working in them as they move toward Confirmation.
- ❖ Explore the Church as the Body of Christ and the meaning of the Eucharist.

Session 2: "We Belong to the Church"

- ❖ Recognize our responsibility as members of the Body of Christ
- ❖ Recognize the outward signs of the Sacraments of Initiation.
- ❖ Understand through Baptism, we become members of the Body of Christ. In Confirmation, we receive an outpouring of the Holy Spirit to be witnesses of Christ's love. We are nourished by the Eucharist.

Session 3: "Discipleship"

- ❖ Explore what it means to be a disciple of Christ in our everyday lives.

Session 4: "The Importance of Community"

- ❖ Examine the importance of a Catholic, Christian community and the ways that they are called to participate in the local and global community as disciples of Christ.
- ❖ Explore image of community within the Scriptures and Church teachings.
- ❖ Examine their interdependence as members of the Body of Christ.

Final Retreat

- ❖ Listen to Christian witness talks – personal living of discipleship
- ❖ Receive Palancas (letters from sponsor, parent, and other loved ones)
- ❖ Final group preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation- Does each candidate want to confirm their baptism and membership in the Body of Christ?