

Palanca

On **Sunday, April 30**, the candidates will participate in an all day Confirmation retreat. For many, it will be their first retreat experience. Because this is a significant process in their lives, it is important that the candidates know that they have a lot of support behind them in a very tangible way. Therefore, *I invite you to write a Palanca or affirmation letter to your child for his/her Confirmation retreat.*

As part of the support of this process, I ask that you please keep this letter confidential and not leave it where your child may see it and please do not talk about it in front of your child or their friends.

The word *Palanca* is a Spanish word that means “lever”. Just as a lever enables a person to move something which is beyond normal strength, Palanca, as used on the Confirmation retreat, empowers the accomplishment of things which would not be possible without the grace of God.

Palanca, which is one of the most characteristic marks of our retreat, is effective only when the prayers, sacrifices and works of mercy are done in conjunction with the presence of the Holy Spirit; allowing God to use us to serve his people.

Bear in mind that these letters in and of themselves are not Palanca. The letters are merely a tangible vehicle in which we convey the actual Palanca being done. In other words, the effort, thoughts and prayers that go into the letters are actually the Palanca, not the letters themselves. During a period of reflection at the end of the retreat day, your child will receive a personalized bag or envelope filled with Palanca. These letters are of such significance in the retreat experience that every child is assured of receiving – at minimum - three letters: one from each parent (or a parental figure) and the sponsor. I also ask the team, catechists and other members of the Holy Trinity community to do Palanca and write Palanca letters to the candidates.

I also invite and encourage you to ask older siblings, extended family and friends to write letters to your child. However, please make sure all involved in writing a letter are doing so maturely and prayerfully. I also encourage you to write to another child who will also be on retreat as an extension of the love and support of the Holy Trinity community; (Please, if possible, get those letters to the candidate’s parent to put in their envelope; if that is not easy or possible then turn the letter in to me.) **I do ask, however, that you keep this experience confidential from younger siblings** that may go through the process in the future.

A parent or the sponsor needs to take responsibility for gathering all letters into the envelope for the candidate and get it to Sara Seligmann by April 3rd. **All Palanca letters are due April 3rd**. Please be attentive to this deadline to assure that all Palanca letters can be sorted and ready for our retreat. If you turn them in after the deadline there is no guarantee that the candidate will get their letters.

The Palanca envelope** can be sent in by mail, Sara Seligmann, 3513 N St. NW, Washington DC 20007, brought to the Parish center offices (left with the reception desk in a labeled box), or left in a box at the RE supply offices connected to the Upper School Cafeteria on Sunday morning (during RE).

***there should be one large envelope filled with all the Palanca letters for your candidate.*

**Palanca letter gathering is the responsibility of the parents and sponsor. If this is not done the candidate may have no letters to open at their retreat while other candidates get theirs.*

1. Helpful Guidelines for writing Palanca

- Sample letters attached
- **One letter from each parent/sponsor written with the guidelines outlined below.**
- Each letter should be brief – **no longer than one typed sheet of paper.**
- Pray before writing the Palanca and allow the Holy Spirit to guide your words.
- Think about what kind of Palanca (prayer, sacrifice or work of mercy) you want to offer to your child during the remainder of this preparation process and, in particular, on the retreat day such as letting them know that you will be praying for them every time you have to stop at a red light, or something like that. They should know it. (And you should be sure to honor your commitment).
- Positively affirm your child's faith journey and affirm your role as a supporter of their life long faith journey.
- Reassure your child that you and God will meet him /her right where he/she is in their faith journey.
- Encourage your child to continue learning about their faith.
- Tell your child that you are praying for them.
- And, finally, while books or other gifts are nice, please leave them for another time.

2. Guidelines for sending Palanca:

B. THERE ARE 3 WAYS TO SEND THE PALANCA ENVELOPE:

Mail to:

Sara Seligmann

Holy Trinity Catholic Church

3513 N Street, NW Washington, DC 20007

Attn: Palanca for _____

OR

Drop off:

Palanca box at Parish reception (during week days) **or** RE supply office on Sunday mornings (during RE)

Make sure candidate's name is on the envelope

Sample Palanca letter from Parent and Sponsor

March 16, 2017

Dear child,

You have dedicated just about every Sunday (except summers!) since kindergarten preparing for several sacraments. After your Baptism, we saw you receive First Holy Communion and Reconciliation. Pretty soon you will be blessed with the Holy Sacrament of Confirmation. We are so proud of you!

Every Sunday that you have spent in Religious Education studying for Confirmation, you have been building a foundation to receive the oil of the Holy Spirit. In doing so, you are being filled with Her seven gifts: wisdom (expressed in his parables and stories), understanding (of the poor and sick), right judgment (when tested by the Pharisees), courage (when journeying to Jerusalem to await His fate), knowledge (of God's will), reverence (for His heavenly Father), and awe (for the wonders of creation).

With these seven gifts, you will find the strength and courage to help you feel confident in your faith. It will be hard at times and there may even be times when you question many parts of your faith and are troubled. But rest assured, if you go back to the core and to your prayer - you will get through the hardest of times.

My promise to you is that I will continually pray that you will find your way in life and recognize God always with you. Then you can be at peace with who you are and you will be the best you can be. You will shine my child.

You have so much to give my child and so much to look forward to in life. Go forth and reach for the stars, with God by your side.

Much love, Dad

- Continued -

Sample Palanca Letter From Older Sibling/Friend

March 14, 2017

Dear John,

Let me start off by saying how extremely proud I am to call you my brother. Through all the tough times in the past year you've kept it together and been there for everyone. So I'm going to try my best, not to get "mushy gushy" on you. But I can't make any promises.

First off, High School! Next year is going to be a huge change for you, especially since you've spent more than half your life at your current school. But I have no doubt that you will love high school and I know that if you work hard you'll get everything out of it that you possibly can, and still manage to have a social life ☺.

I know we're 3 years apart, but this year and especially next year, those three years are going to seem like much smaller of a gap. And while you will always be my baby brother, the maturity level you are at I hope will bring us closer together.

So now's the part when I tell you about how much fun Confirmation is and how great of an experience it is. But when I say it, I'm being serious. None of the "this is what I'm supposed to say so I guess I'll say it" stuff. My Confirmation retreat was one of the best times I had in eighth grade. I still keep in touch with the friends I made that day (and through the whole process), both girls and boys. Some of the guys you've met may end up in your class at Prep, some of the girls you may end up talking to for years or some you may just happen to come across later on in high school. But no matter how, the friendships you make and experiences you have will affect the next four years of your life.

Personally, it took a little while after Confirmation to actually even notice a difference, and I can't say the changes I notice now are necessarily significant, or that they were actually an effect of Confirmation itself. But I can tell that I am in the process of growing. Part of that will come with the Catholic (Jesuit) education you'll receive over the next four years; another part will simply come from maturing. The greatest things I got out of my Confirmation were the experiences and the friendships that allowed me to grow as a person. Confirmation is not necessarily about feeling an immediate change in your religious life, but rather is about allowing yourself to grow in your faith (cliché right? Sorry, but it's true). So my wish for you as you are entering the last stage of this process is that you move forward with an open mind and allow yourself to experience the next four years (and the rest of your life) with a better idea of who you want to be.

I hope you know that no matter what I will always be here for you. No matter how big of a mistake you make, I will forever be here to help you make things right. So I hope that you have an excellent day at retreat and I hope you make the most of these experiences that you can't really get anywhere else.

Love Always, Your sister