

ST. CHARLES BORROMEIO CATHOLIC CHURCH CONFIRMATION PREPARATION PROGRAM

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

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 Family Involvement Activity - 'Altarations'
- participate in the sponsor/candidate activity
- participate in Confirmation retreats
- participate in Advent and Lenten Reconciliation Services / Mass
- be regularly involved in social justice activities
- perform or attend one spiritual activity
- 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 Director 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 in December of the 1st year of preparation.

A Letter of Intent

Each candidate must write a letter of intent, addressed to the **Pastor, Fr. Bo Majors, Fr. Jude Emunemu, and the Director of Youth Ministry, Janeen Rodrigue**.

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:

- Begin with your greeting: Dear Father Majors/Father Emunemu and Mrs. Rodrigue.
- Introduce yourself and share some information about yourself, such as your family, your interests and hobbies, and a little about your background.
- 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*.)
- 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.

The Letter of intent is due in the spring of the 2nd year of preparation.

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 nonbelievers, 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:

- 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.)
- 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 in the spring of the 2nd year of preparation.

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 the Confirmation retreat each 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 whom 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.

Be regularly involved in spiritual activities

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,
- 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!

Attend Confirmation Rehearsal (Level III)

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

Participate in the Liturgy and Rite of Confirmation (Level III)

Confirmation will be in the fall of the candidate's junior year of high school. The exact date will be announced.

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)

The initiation of children into the sacramental life of the church is primarily the responsibility and concern of parents (IC 890, RS3). Although the child has reached the age of reason at the time of preparation for Confirmation, they have not yet been fully initiated. They lack the strength to be an official witness and disciple of Jesus Christ from Confirmation. Parents must assist their child(ren) in the life of holiness.

Brothers and sisters of the child(ren) share in this responsibility of handing on the faith. Siblings, especially those who have been fully initiated, assist the parents by their example. This family catechesis precedes, accompanies and enriches all other catechesis.

The entire family is to deliver the Gospel to each other daily in word and deed, filled with love and respect: “For this reason the family home is rightly called the domestic church, a community of grace and prayer, a school of human virtues and of Christian charity” (CCC1666). The family is nothing less than a sign and image of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Trinity, for our unbelieving world (CCC 2205) Active participation in the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist, regular Reconciliation, daily family prayer and Scripture reading enable families to live the Gospel life of Jesus Christ.

The participation of the parents in the Confirmation program is VITAL! That means as parents you too will attend some sessions with your child so that you may participate in their ongoing faith formation.

It is important for you to set the example for your child as he or she takes on the responsibility of a confirmed Catholic. The example of the parents' prayer life and attitude toward Jesus Christ and His Church is the best teaching sons and daughters will ever have. Although it is the candidate's responsibility to complete all requirements, it is the parents' responsibility to assist by making sure all assignments are done on time and that his or her child is at each scheduled activity.

Because parents:

- are the primary educators of their child(ren)
- 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.

Free-will Decision of the Candidate

No candidate should be coerced into the formation process, as this not only defeats the purpose of the program but also creates an atmosphere that could negatively affect others. It is expected that the young person who wishes to receive the sacrament of Confirmation accepts what it means to be confirmed and will participate fully in the process as well as take seriously what it means to be a member of the Church. Candidates, together with families, are asked to read over and discuss the expectations and requirements for the preparation program. Failure to meet any of the expectations and/or complete any of the requirements herein stated is equivalent to withdrawal from the program for the year (candidates may re-enroll the following year).