

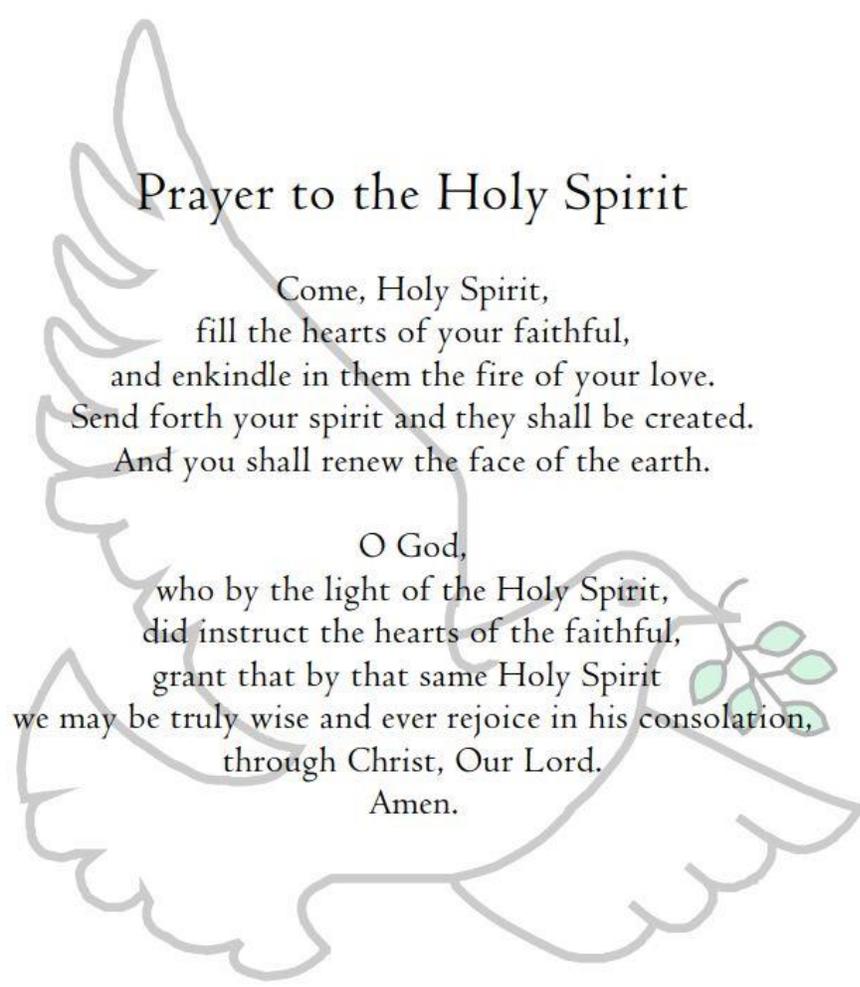
Sacrament of Confirmation

Sponsor Preparation Booklet

Saints Joseph and Francis Xavier Parish

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Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Come, Holy Spirit,
fill the hearts of your faithful,
and enkindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your spirit and they shall be created.
And you shall renew the face of the earth.

O God,
who by the light of the Holy Spirit,
did instruct the hearts of the faithful,
grant that by that same Holy Spirit
we may be truly wise and ever rejoice in his consolation,
through Christ, Our Lord.

Amen.

Introduction

You have been chosen to be a Confirmation sponsor! This is an honor that carries responsibilities. The candidate has chosen you as a person to admire in the Christian life. He/she wants to learn from you and share with you about what it means to be a Catholic Christian in a more adult manner. You will be a guide through the preparation process and a support throughout the days to follow.

The sacrament of Confirmation is an affirming sacrament. It is the opportunity for the young person seeking Confirmation to look seriously at his/her faith once more and then to affirm it as a positive part of life's experiences. The opportunity for sponsors is to affirm the young person--to see, rejoice and point out the goodness very much present. It is also a chance to discuss some of those topics dear to our hearts, but sometimes neglected in our conversation. Such conversation confirms the convictions of one's beliefs.

Besides continual example, support and prayer for the candidate, the responsibilities of the sponsor are:

- ◆ to meet four times with the candidate for faith sharing using the suggestions in the booklet as a guide;
- ◆ to write a letter to the pastor speaking of the candidate's readiness for Confirmation.
Your letter should include a statement of your belief that the candidate has an understanding and appreciation of the Sacrament of Confirmation and a commitment to Christian values. It should also describe the Christian qualities that you have observed in the candidate and any other comments you wish to share. This letter is due one week prior to Confirmation (February 29) and is to be mailed to:

Rev. Wayne F. Watts
Saints Joseph and Francis Xavier Parish
1747 Lake Avenue
Wilmette, IL 60091

Or emailed to wwatts@ssjfx.org

- ◆ to be present for **practice:**
 - at the St. Francis Xavier campus on March 4th at 5:00 pm for 10:00 am Celebration and 6:00 pm for 2:00 pm Celebration
 - at the St. Joseph campus on March 6th at 7:00 pm for the 1:30 pm Celebration
- ◆ to present the candidate to the Bishop at the celebration of Confirmation at one of the three times offered on March 7th & March 8th

The pages that follow are an explanation of the role of sponsor, the criteria used for the evaluation of candidates, and the suggested faith sharing sessions. The faith sharing format is meant to be a guide, please feel free to adapt the format to best facilitate sharing between you and the candidate. What is shared in these sessions is between you and the candidate and is not handed in.

The four faith sharing sessions should be done at a time convenient for you and the candidate. It is important that the space provide a bit of privacy to encourage honest sharing. Your preparation for the session should include looking at the Scripture references, reflecting on the topic, and refining what you believe. Reviewing the questions will aid to keep the conversation flowing. The outline for the actual session is simple. Read one of the references from scripture. Make sure the passage is understood and relate it to the topic. Use the questions to guide the conversation. Close with a simple prayer. It is affirming to hear an admired person pray out loud. You may wish to write some notes concerning the session. They will be helpful in writing your recommendation letter to Fr. Watts.

Role Of Sponsors

When Jesus began his public ministry, he called to himself a group of people who were known as his disciples. They lived with him, shared his joys and sorrows, and learned from him to seek to do the will of the Father. Like any community, the Apostles had their problems. But Jesus taught them to be loving, caring persons who lived a life of service. Today, the Church is that community. We who belong to it share in that same mission. We also share in the same life - the life of Jesus himself.

Through their special witness when working with Confirmation candidates, sponsors model the faith. They help the candidate know the community in a deeper way. Sponsors help the candidate to see the action of the Holy Spirit within themselves, within the Christian community, and within the world around them.

The sponsors also speak in the name of the candidates to the parish community. They testify that the candidate is truly ready to make a commitment to the Church. They testify that the candidate has demonstrated that the Holy Spirit is alive and active within the candidate who is beginning to live a life for others.

Who is a sponsor?

A sponsor is first and foremost a witness to the teachings of Jesus in the candidate's life. He/she should be an active member of his/her parish community and should know the candidate very well. The sponsor helps the candidate to see the action of the Holy Spirit, not only in their own life, but also in the sponsor's life, in the church of Jesus and in the world.

Duties of the sponsor

They meet at least four times with the candidate to discuss the candidate's growth in faith and service. These meetings are set up at the mutual convenience of candidate and sponsor. This booklet is provided to help structure these meetings. They send a special letter to the pastor concerning the candidate's readiness for Confirmation. They present the candidate to the bishop for Confirmation.

Who may be chosen?

1. The Godparents at Baptism. This is a choice which most clearly expresses the relationship between Baptism and Confirmation.
2. Any other confirmed Catholic, 16 years or older, who is an active member of, the Catholic faith and is an important witness in the candidate's own spiritual development.
3. Either male or female may be a sponsor. A sponsor need not be the same sex as the candidate.
4. According to current Church law, parents may not be sponsors. They may however fill in for the sponsor when necessary. Parents may be a proxy at the celebration

If you have time you may want to consider exploring films, books, music or other resources together. This can stimulate discussion about the beliefs and values expressed.

Regardless of medium, these three questions might help prompt conversation:

- 1) Is God present? If yes, how? If no, why not?
- 2) Does it (the song, film, book, etc.) bring you closer in your relationship with God? Jesus? Why or why not?
- 3) What did you read, see or hear that you would or would not want to incorporate into your own life? Why or why not?

After we celebrate the sacrament of Confirmation, we encourage you to continue supporting and mentoring this young person. Your continued presence in his/her life is important as s/he faces the challenges of maturing into adulthood. You might want to consider sending a note on the anniversary of reception of the sacrament. As time goes on, you may find ways to commemorate rites of passage, such as getting a job or passing the driver's exams. Hopefully this process has introduced him or her your to the importance of service to others. Continue to help him or her to discern how they might best use her/his talents both within the Church and the larger community.

The staffs of Saints Joseph and Francis Xavier Parish are here to support you in your role as sponsor. If you have any questions, concerns or input for us, please feel free to call at Dani Froelich at 847-256-4250 or Dana McKenna at 847-251-0771. Know you are in our prayers as you accept the role of sponsor for a young person who is dear to you and to the Saints Joseph and Francis Xavier parish community.

Criteria for Evaluation of Candidates

Readiness for Confirmation is exhibited by:

1. **Regular participation** in the celebration of the Eucharist (Mass) and willingness to grow in knowledge of what they celebrate.
2. Open to grow in the understanding of Catholic beliefs and traditions exhibited by regular attendance at class or other activities designed for Confirmation candidates, especially the retreat.
3. Live lives of compassion, justice and loving service reflected by regular and on-going acts of service toward others.
4. Show desire to grow in religious dimensions of their faith by regular sharing with their sponsor - or a proxy.
5. Can explain basic beliefs and traditions of the Catholic faith and can express these to others either verbally or in writing.
6. Give evidence of growing into being persons of integrity and responsibility.
7. Express desire in writing to celebrate the sacrament stating reasons for personal decision not based on peer pressure or parental pressure or local custom.
8. Willing to learn how to stand up for beliefs regardless of personal cost and show evidence of growing into this.
9. All requirements for Confirmation completed.

These include:

Record of Service Hours
Letter to the Bishop
Choice of Confirmation Name/Why Chosen
Personal Interview
Baptismal Certificate on record at parish
Mastery of Basic Prayers & Tenets of the Faith

Expectations of Confirmation Candidates

- * Attend the parent and candidate informational meeting.
- * Attend and fully participate in all learning sessions.
- * Participate in the Rite of Enrollment.
- * Choose a sponsor and provide your sponsor with the sponsor materials.
- * Set times and dates for four faith-sharing sessions with your sponsor on the themes found in the candidate and sponsor folders.
- * Participate in service opportunities.
(Twelve hours should be done within the parish & twelve hours should be done within the broader community.)
- * Participate in Sunday Eucharist (Mass) and strive to develop a habit of daily personal prayer.
- * Decide on a Confirmation name.
- * Complete the "Information for Confirmation Record" form.
- * Write a Saint report.
- * Write a letter to the Bishop.
- * Prepare for your interview by reflecting on your desire to be confirmed, reviewing the basic beliefs and traditions of the Catholic faith, thinking about your service experiences, and deciding how you will continue to grow in faith and follow Christ after Confirmation.
- * Participate in an interview with an adult of the parish.
- * Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- * Attend and fully participate in the Confirmation Retreat and Mass.
- * Attend the practice for Confirmation.
- * Celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- * Continue to live as a follower of Jesus and active member of the Church.

PART B

Faith Sharing Format for Candidates and Sponsors

Session I - What does it mean to be a Christian?

Being a Christian means being a follower of Jesus and a believer in His resurrection. Such a commitment has an influence on our lives and is reflected in our actions. A follower of Jesus observes that He gave us a great commandment: to love. The call to love and our manner of doing so makes us Christian. Although the Gospel stories all speak of Jesus' life of love, the following are some specific places where love is spoken about. Read them carefully and pray for an understanding of Jesus' command and example to love.

John 15: 12-17	(Jesus' love for us as friends)
1 John 3: 18-24	(Love requires actions)
1 Corinthians 13: 1-8	(Characteristics of love)

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank you for giving us your word and teaching us about love. I thank you for the people who love me and I ask for the strength to show my love in return. I want to see the needs of others and touch them with love. Your example shows me the way. Jesus, be with me as I think about your message and learn the message of love. Amen.

Questions for Reflection & Discussion

1. Name three ways Jesus showed love to others.
2. What do the readings say?
3. Name three values that are present in these Scripture passages.
4. How do I include these values in my life?

5. How do I show God's love to others?
6. Who loves me and how do I know it?
7. Am I being faithful to personal prayer and participating at Mass on weekends?
8. How am I doing with my service project? What am I learning about myself and about others from this experience?

Closing Prayer

Re-read 1 Corinthians 13: 1-8.

Replace the word "love" with Jesus.

Re-read once more and replace the word "love" with your name.

Talk to Jesus about how this makes you feel.

Session II - Prayer

In the first session, we reflected upon what it means to be Christian and how that challenges us into action. This session is concerned with our relationship with God. Just as we are in relationship with others, so too, are we in relationship with God. The communication with God we call prayer. The following Scripture readings are about prayer. The psalm is an example of a prayer from the Hebrew Scripture. While on earth, Jesus taught about prayer in action and in word. Read them carefully seeking to understand how prayer affects our relationship with God.

Scripture References

Luke 6:12-16,	Mark 1:35,	Mark 6:45-46	(Jesus at prayer)
Luke 11: 1-13			(Jesus teaches the disciples how to pray)
Matthew 6: 5-8			(Praying is secret)
Psalms 23			(The Lord is my shepherd)

Opening Prayer

God, my creator, you are always in my presence. You are most high and full of glory, but you never leave my side. You want to speak with me and share the gift of your Holy Spirit with me. For these gifts, I say "thank you." Open my heart and teach me how to pray so that I may grow in my awareness of your constant friendship. Amen.

Questions for Reflection & Discussion

1. After reading Psalm 23 what do you know about the relationship between the psalm writer and God?
2. After reading the Scripture passages about Jesus what did you learn about Jesus' prayer life?
3. Why did Jesus teach the "Our Father"? What is the message?
4. Name one prayerful person you know. Why do you think he/she is prayerful? What can you learn from him/her?
5. Can you think of one time when God spoke clearly to you?

6. Think about your experience of prayer
 - ... where do you pray
 - ... when do you pray
 - ... who taught you to pray
 - ... how do you listen to God
 - ... how do you pray in church
 - ... how do you feel when you pray

7. Am I being faithful to personal prayer and participating at Mass on weekends?

8. How am I doing with my service project? What am I learning about myself and about others from this experience?

Closing Prayer

Pray the “Our Father” slowly. Think about each phrase. Pick your favorite part and tell God why you like it.

Session III - **The Church**

Although our relationship with God is very important, we do not go to God alone. As Catholic Christians we claim membership in the Roman Catholic Church. Through our baptism and profession of faith we become members. As a member you have both rights and responsibilities. You have a right to support on your faith journey as you explore what it means to be a Catholic Christian; you have a right to the sacraments of the church as befits your age and position. In turn you have a responsibility to learn about your faith and to be an active member of the Christian community we call church. The following readings speak of the establishment of the Christian community, and a model St. Paul gives us for the church.

Scripture References

Acts 1, 1-11	(Jesus gives a command to teach all nations before He ascends - the Ascension Event)
Acts 2, 1-11	(The coming of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles - the Pentecost Event)
1 Cor 12, 12-26	(St. Paul speaks of the body as a model for church)

Opening Prayer

Come, Spirit of Truth and Love, fill me with an understanding of this church I call my own. I thank you for the gift of baptism and hear your call to put my calling into action. You are the Holy Spirit that goes before me to show me the way. You are the Holy Spirit that I hear in the quiet of my heart. Give me the fullness of your Spirit so that I may know my gifts and share them with my church. Amen.

Questions for Reflection & Discussion

1. How do I fit into the Saints Joseph and Francis Xavier parish community?
2. What does membership mean for me? How do I experience it?
3. The readings speak of the apostles being sent forth, as a follower of Jesus what am I sent forth to do?

4. What gifts do I have to bring to the church?
5. What does the church need from me?
6. What do I need from the church?
7. How do I relate what happens at Mass Sunday morning with the rest of my week?
8. Am I being faithful to personal prayer and participating at Mass on weekends?
9. How am I doing with my service project? What am I learning about myself and about others from this experience?

Closing Prayer

Think of all the people you know who are part of our church—the leaders of the parish, your family members, neighbors and friends. Pray for them by name saying, “Come, Holy Spirit, to (name) .” When you’ve prayed for all who come to mind, talk to God about these people and tell God what it means to you to be part of our church.

Session IV - **Affirming My Belief**

In these preparation sessions you have examined Christian living, prayer and the church. These three are central to your desire to be confirmed. Confirmation in the Catholic Christian church says these three will influence your decisions in life. In this session you will reflect on how you use these values when making decisions about relationships, activities, and ways to use your time and talent. You have been called to a way of life that has many blessings, but it also requires much faith. Our beliefs make demands upon our everyday living. You have been challenged by your God. The church is counting on you.

Scripture References

Jeremiah 1, 4-10	(The call of Jeremiah)
Matthew 4, 18-22	(The call of the apostles)
John 6, 60-70	(Many disciples desert Jesus)

Opening Prayer

My God, I know you as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I also know you as the One who calls me. You call me to live by my convictions and values. You call me to serve other people and to be close to you. You call me to deepen my membership in the Catholic Christian church and to care about all peoples of the world. Sometimes I feel a bit overwhelmed by your call. I find comfort in your constant love for me. Give me the courage of my convictions as I continue my journey to you through the sacrament of Confirmation. Amen.

Questions for Reflection & Discussion

1. Think about your personal call from God. What is God calling you to do?
2. What are the negative and positive consequences in choosing to embrace your calling as a Christian?
3. Who are trusted people in your life who can affirm your decision and challenge you to grow? What are they saying to you?

4. If you choose to continue the journey of faith in your life, if you embrace the sacrament of Confirmation, how will your actions change?
5. Am I being faithful to personal prayer and participating at Mass on weekends?
6. How am I doing with my service project? What am I learning about myself and about others from this experience?

Closing Prayer

Spend some quiet time thinking about what the sacrament of Confirmation means to you. Talk to God about your fears and your eagerness. Ask for guidance in your decision making. Praise God for all the goodness in your life.