

# Letter to Sponsors

Thank you for committing yourself to be a mentor to a Confirmation candidate of St. William. The Confirmation preparation process is a very important time for the candidates. It is a real chance for them to root themselves in the life of the Church. Your participation in your Confirmand's preparation is a true ministry to him or her.

This Sponsor Manual is an outline of four distinct separate meetings of learning and discussion between the Confirmation candidate and his or her sponsor or proxy (another available mentor if the sponsor is not available.) Materials needed are a bible, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, some pens and paper, and a positive attitude.

Each meeting will take no less than one hour. The meetings should be spaced apart as much as possible in order to generate a sense of a preparation *process* suggested times are listed for each meeting. Although a proxy can be used instead of the actual sponsor, the same person should lead all four meetings.

Please read carefully this entire manual. It is set up to guide and assist you in your mentoring of your student. No ideas, questions, or help I can provide could ever measure up to the impact your personal touch will have on the time you spend with your Confirmand; please don't feel confined to this manual. Please be aware of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and make the most of it. View your role as that of Christ and love them accordingly.

Here are a few steps that should help maximize your time and effort together as well as foster a very fruitful meeting.

1. Pray. Any preparation, teaching, or mentoring we do by our own power will fall short of God's plan. Pray that the Lord's work will be done and that you will merely be His instrument. Open and close each session with prayer.
2. Prepare. You should have a good sense of which direction you want the meeting to go. This will require some advanced reading, thought, and more prayer. Although the Holy Spirit often will guide us away from how we intended to do things, it is through our preparation that we are ready to follow Him.
3. Set the meetings well in advance, making sure all four sessions get scheduled. Make these meetings a real priority. Call the Confirmand the day before as a reminder.
4. Evaluate. After each session, give some thought as to what went well, what could have been better, how you did, etc. Sharing this with someone you look up to can help improve the next session. If you come up with any suggestions on how to improve anything, please let me know!
5. Add your own touch. Make the meetings enjoyable by adding music, art, meeting at an interesting place, taking a field trip to somewhere of significance to the topic, or by bringing food. Writing and creating are also great ways to help students enjoy retaining information.

If you have any concerns, questions, or comments, please contact me at the numbers below. May the Lord bless you abundantly for this service.

Sincerely in Christ,

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Acknowledgement: Much of the material in this sponsor guide is taken from the St. Thomas More, Austin Confirmation Sponsor's Manual, which has been adopted from Making Disciples, Logos Productions Inc. written by William H. Willimon. The use of this material is solely for educational purposes and no profit shall be made in anyway from its use. Adapted and reproduced with permission from St. Thomas More in Austin, TX and Patricia LaFuente. Much of it was compiled by John Valentino & Chris Bartlett

## Your Role as a Confirmation Sponsor

As a sponsor, you serve in three ways:

Your first role as a sponsor is as a role model in faith for your candidate. This is why the Church requires that a sponsor be 16 years old or older, fully initiated in the Catholic Church, and a practicing member of the Church. Your Candidate will look to you for guidance. That's an awesome honor, that's an awesome responsibility.

Secondly, you are a companion on your candidate's faith journey. You should support him/ her in prayer and in their journey into a deeper relationship with God. Your interaction with the Candidate should exceed this manual, it should reach far beyond their Confirmation ceremony. Basically, you have acquired the lifelong privilege, as did their parents, to help form this child of God.

Finally, you are a witness for the Candidate before the entire Church. It is your task to proclaim that your candidate is ready and willing to accept the responsibilities and privileges of being a fully initiated member of the Catholic Church. These three ways you serve may seem like a large responsibility, and it is, but being a sponsor should also build you up in your own faith journey and lead you closer to Christ.

### **CONFIRMATION CERIMONY: May 11, 2019**

Spanish Liturgy - 10:00am

English Liturgy - 1:00pm

**Sponsors & Students Arrive at 70 Minutes prior in Parish Hall**

**REHERSAL: May 8, 2019 – In Parish Hall**

English Rehearsal - 6:30-8:00pm

Spanish Rehearsal - 7:30-9:00pm

### **Suggested Session Dates 2018-2019**

These sessions are valuable at any time, but the following suggestions will best reinforce their formation process for Confirmation.

Session 1: Fall 2018 – Mid-January 2019

Session 2: Mid-January 2019 – Mid-February 2019

Session 3: Mid-February 2019 – April 2019

Session 4: May 2019- Late Summer 2019

Please note that the last session should take place after the sacrament of Confirmation has been received.

A special time to be in prayer for your candidate would be during their Confirmation Retreat on January 18-20, 2019. Lives are transformed through God's love at this event.

## The First Meeting

### **Get Acquainted: Faith & Hope**

**Purpose:** This meeting's purpose is to allow the sponsor/mentor and the Confirmand to get to know each other better. Many sponsors already know their confirmand fairly well, but most have not shared much with them about their faith. This meeting will give the sponsors an opportunity to share about their faith and it will allow them to find out where their candidate is in his/ her faith journey.

**Resources:** Paper

#### **Preparation**

Pray & Reflect: It is helpful to reflect upon your own journey before accompanying someone else on his or hers. The awareness of your experiences will aid you in your conversations with your Confirmand.

To prepare for this meeting, pray and reflect upon your faith journey up to this point. When did you first experience God in your life? At what times in your life have you been distant from God and how have you grown closer? Where are you at in your faith journey today? Where do you see yourself in the future with your faith journey?

Contact Your Teen: A week or 2 in advance, it would be great to send your Confirmand a letter letting him or her know that you are excited to be their sponsor, tell him a little about yourself and invite him or her to meet with you. (Receiving mail is exciting for all of us.) Call your candidate a few days in advance to remind them about the meeting, it's time and place. Maybe you'd like to have dinner with them and then discuss your faith. Make it in an atmosphere where both of you can feel comfortable and enjoy the meeting.

#### **Activity**

\*Begin the meeting with a prayer, and then take some time to get to know each other. You might ask questions like: What do you like about school? What don't you like? Tell me a little about your family. Tell me about your hopes, dreams, interests, and goals. Share about your own experiences as well.

*\*This session is less about content than establishing your relationship. Your Confirmand needs to know that being with you is safe and you can be trusted. You will need to show that you are motivated to participate with this younger person in a faith-building experience.*

\*Using the Paper, Each of you will Map/ Chart out your faith journey up to this point. An idea for this would be to make a chart. The height of the chart represents closeness to God, the length of the chart represents time. Start at birth and graph the spiritual high and low points of each of your lives and then share them with each other. If there are times where you feel you have strayed from the path, indicate that by drawing the line low on the chart. For those times you have felt especially close to God indicate that by making your mark bolder and higher in the chart. Next to the path, write any significant event that you remember happening. (Wars, Births, injuries, etc.) Make sure you both take some time for reflection before you begin. Remember to note the blessings and challenges along the way. Take a few minutes for both you and your Confirmand to make your faith timeline. Then share them with each other. Often times there are stories behind the joys and sorrows of our life. Exchange wisdom with your Confirmand, listen to what he/ she has to share.

When Sharing explain your faith events. How was your faith being shaped? This can include references to things like church camps, death of someone you loved, sacraments, great 'ah-ha!' moments, and high and low points that had faith shaping power. Find out as much as you can about your candidate.

\*Let your confirmand know that you are excited to be with them on this leg of their faith journey. Make a commitment to Pray for each other. Maybe even schedule a time that you will set aside to pray for each other each week.

\*Take time to pray together. Thanks God for the lessons, joys and sorrows of you journeys so far. Ask for His guidance for the rest of your journeys and especially for you confirmand's journey towards being confirmed, a journey that you will accompany him/ her on. Thank God for the opportunity you both have to learn and to grow and ask God's blessing on your time together.

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## Session Two: Holy Spirit

**Purpose:** To explore the role of the Holy Spirit presently in your lives, and to see His role in the lives of others.

**Resources:** A Bible, A printed copy of the Nicene Creed. (Suggested supplies of Construction Paper & Markers for optional activity)

Try not to be threatened by what you and your Confirmand don't know about the Holy Spirit. Rather, share with each other how you experience God's presence and guidance in your daily life--a basic function of the Spirit.

### **Preparation**

At the close of this session is a suggestion for making bookmarks. Gather the necessary materials: strips of construction paper or poster board, markers, and a book of religious symbols.

Prepare to talk about the Holy Spirit by reading Acts 2:1-2. This is the story that is read during the church service on Pentecost Sunday, a day to celebrate the presence of the Holy Spirit. Also read the Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 687-747 for a deeper understanding of the Holy Spirit's role in the Church and our lives.

In reading the account from Acts, note how the Holy Spirit is seen (as tongues of fire) and heard (sound like the roar of a mighty wind). Note the apparent chaos of the scene- a multitude of differing nationalities, and yet the end result is that of unity and understanding. When reading the Catechism, think specifically of what we mean each time we say the Nicene Creed in Mass. Also consider how the Holy Spirit is a Person; and that we should know him as a "who" and not a "what."

The focus of this account from Acts affirms that the Holy Spirit creates faith. Now reflect upon the questions that will be used between you and your Confirmand.

### **Activity**

Begin with the Prayer to the Holy Spirit.

Together, read the story of the Day of Pentecost from Acts 2:1-21.

1. Have you had experiences that helped to create or deepen your faith? What were those experiences like? Do you believe that these were the work of the Holy Spirit?
2. How are you aware of the Holy Spirit in the world today?
3. When your faith feels weary is there anything you do that helps to encourage your faith? How do you think the Holy Spirit participates in those experiences?
4. Hand the Confirmand the Nicene Creed, (the creed we proclaim during the Profession of Faith at Mass). Now have the confirmand quiz you on how well you know it. Make this fun. See how far you can go without any help, then only have him or her help you a little bit and see if you can't go further.
5. Now you hold the Nicene Creed, and ask the teen (who was just staring at it) recite to Creed. Help him or her along too the same way in which they helped you. It's not easy! ☺
6. What about the creed strikes you the most when it talks about the Holy Spirit? Why?
7. How do our lives reflect the beliefs we proclaim in the creed during mass?
8. Together, recite the creed. Help each other along if you get stuck, but try to avoid going to the 'cheat sheet.'

(Suggested Activity) Make a bookmark using one of the symbols commonly representing the Holy Spirit like a dove, flame, or mighty wind. Complete the light blue sheet on faith symbols to jog some ideas for your bookmarks. Be creative, maybe search through a magazine and cut out all the images or symbols that relate to the Holy Spirit and then begin making the bookmark from there. Maybe even include a picture of yourself.

Exchange bookmarks and keep them in your Bibles as a reminder to pray for one another. Close your session with prayer, using some of the images of the Holy Spirit you have shared in this session. Thank the Holy Spirit for blessing your time together and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you through the coming week. Conclude by praying the Lord's Prayer.

## Session Three: Through Death to New Life

**Purpose:** To come to an understanding that the life of a Christian requires suffering, but that there is hope in Christ for he has conquered death.

**Resources:** A Bible & a Catechism of the Catholic Church

### **Preparation**

Prepare to talk about Death by reading John 11:1-44, 1 Cor 15:51-57, and 2 Cor 4:7-14. Also read the Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 1005-1022. Spend some time reflecting upon the questions you and your Confirmand will be discussing.

Our faith in Christ speaks clearly to the issues of death and resurrection. Without life there can be no death. Without death there can be no life. Take some time to place yourself with Jesus through the experience that led to the cross. In some ways we know the story of the passion well. Eternal life is at the core of the Christian message.

Some people might wonder why Catholics seem to have so many crucifixes. If you were asked, could you tell them? Is it that Catholics have a fascination with suffering? No, that is not the case. The crucifix is a symbol, a sacramental sign that teaches us much about life. When we look at the cross, it should remind us of the incredible love that Jesus our Lord has for us. God's son, incarnate, became like us so that God might be present to us in a very special way.

Uniting our sacrifices and sufferings is the way of the cross. When we choose the way of the cross, a part of us dies, and it is painful. But as Jesus showed us, the way of the cross brings a new life. That new life is the butterfly that emerges from the cocoon, the true image and likeness in which we were created. It is the truth that Jesus talks about that will set us free. Our sinful self dies, so that a new creation may be born.

Each yes we say to God brings us one step closer to the resurrection, so too does death from this world. At death the body crumbles back into dust. The soul begins to exist apart from the body. It is our soul that lives on into eternity and experiences and knows the joy or sadness of life with God or life without God.

### **Activity**

Together, read John 11: 1-44, 1 Corinthians 15:51 -57, and 2 Corinthians 4:7-14. Also read the Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 1005-1014.

1. What emotions do people experience when someone they love has died? Why do you think we have funerals instead of just burying people who die--why the public gathering?
2. What aspects of death bring us sadness? What aspects of death (should) bring us joy? Compare them to Jesus' reaction to Lazarus' death.
3. What are you doing now to make your death a joyful occasion? What could you be doing better? Think about both how your life will be remembered and your final destination.
4. How does the "Hail Mary" end? How is prayer relevant to death?
5. Discuss symbols of life, (water, light, heart.) How can baptism be seen as a death to old ways and a birth into new life?

Close with prayer, giving thanks for God's presence in times of sorrow, and for God's gift of peace. Conclude by praying together the Lord's Prayer and a Hail Mary, while remembering by name those who have departed this life whom you wish to remember.

## Session Four: The Faith Journey Continues

**Purpose** To digest what occurred at the confirmation and to discern how this sacrament can be lived daily.

**Resources:** A Bible & a Catechism of the Catholic Church

### **Preparation**

Read Romans 8:35-39. Also read the Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 1285-1289, 1302-1311. Reflect upon the questions you and your Confirmand will be discussing. Make a list of at least 4 or 5 things you are thankful for and qualities you have seen in your meetings with the student.

Confirmation is NOT the end. It is not a 'graduation' out of the church. It is our spiritual strengthening, the preparation for and beginning of our adult faith life. This session helps you to think about your hopes for the continuing growth of your faith.

What do you see in the future for your relationship with your Confirmand? How will you continue to support your teen as an active member of the body of Christ?

What have you gained during this time? For what do you wish to thank your student? For what do you wish to thank God? Do you have some blessing words to speak in order to send your Confirmand into the next chapter of his or her faith journey? What kind of continuing relationship do you hope for with your Confirmand?

### **Activity**

Together, read Romans 8:35-39. Also, read together the Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 1285-1289, 1302-1311.

1. How does being a follower of Christ give us hope? In your past what things kept you from having a better relationship with Jesus Christ?
2. What would your life be like if you had never been aware of God, Jesus, or the Church?
3. List some of the ways your church gives people an opportunity to grow in their faith. Put a check mark beside those in which you participated in the past Put a star beside those things which you participated in the past Put a star beside those things you hope to take advantage of in the future. (I hope SWYM is on that list!)
4. List some ways you can help other people in the church to grow or experience God's hope for the future (Teaching Religious Education, service work, taking Communion to shut-ins). How does this unite you with Christ?
5. How have you seen yourself grow in your understanding of God? How do you feel about your relationship with God at this point in life?
6. What hopes do you have for your future? How is your faith in God a part of that future?
7. Share your list of things you are thankful for and affirmations with the student.

Set up a time to celebrate the journey so far. A dinner, a movie, a sports event, some type of a fun outing that you can both enjoy your time together and appreciate each other for the journey traveled so far.

Close in prayer with a spirit of thanksgiving for the Sacrament, each of you thank the Lord for three things you've gained from this process. Ask the Lord's help for three ways in which you hope to live out what you have learned through this process or received from this sacrament.