
CONFIRMATION SPONSOR GUIDE

Congratulations on being invited to serve as a Confirmation Sponsor! This is a great honor as well as a lifelong responsibility. Here is how Church Law defines your role:

As far as possible the person to be confirmed is to have a sponsor. The sponsor's function is to take care that the person confirmed behaves as a true witness of Christ and faithfully fulfills the duties inherent in this sacrament. (Code of Canon Law, canon 892)

You are accepting a lifelong office that makes it your responsibility before God to assist your Candidate in living a truly Christian life and living out his/her unique vocation. To assist you in this lofty task, this guide will:

- Help you better understand the Sacrament of Confirmation
- Outline the preparation process for your Candidate
- Give you several prompts for discussion with your Candidate
- Outline the Confirmation Liturgy
- Provide several suggestions for fulfilling your office after Confirmation

About the Sacrament of Confirmation

The following questions from the Compendium to the Catechism of the Catholic Church serve as a brief refresher on the Sacrament of Confirmation:

265. What place does Confirmation have in the divine plan of salvation?

In the Old Testament the prophets announced that the Spirit of the Lord would rest on the awaited Messiah and on the entire messianic people. The whole life and mission of Jesus were carried out in total communion with the Holy Spirit. The apostles received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and proclaimed “the great works of God” (*Acts 2:11*). They gave the gift of the same Spirit to the newly baptized by the laying on of hands. Down through the centuries, the Church has continued to live by the Spirit and to impart him to her children.

266. Why is this sacrament called *Chrismation* or *Confirmation*?

It is called *Chrismation* (in the Eastern Churches: Anointing with holy myron or chrism) because the essential rite of the sacrament is anointing with chrism. It is called *Confirmation* because it confirms and strengthens baptismal grace.

267. What is the essential rite of Confirmation?

The essential rite of Confirmation is the anointing with Sacred Chrism (oil mixed with balsam and consecrated by the bishop), which is done by the laying on of the hand of the minister who pronounces the sacramental words proper to the rite. In the West this anointing is done on the forehead of the baptized with the words, “Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit”. In the Eastern Churches of the Byzantine rite this anointing is also done on other parts of the body with the words, “The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit”.

268. What is the effect of Confirmation?

The effect of Confirmation is a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit like that of Pentecost. This outpouring impresses on the soul an indelible character and produces a growth in the grace of Baptism. It roots the recipient more deeply in divine sonship, binds him more firmly to Christ and to the Church and reinvigorates the gifts of the Holy Spirit in his soul. It gives a special strength to witness to the Christian faith.

About Our Confirmation Prep Process

We prepare Candidates for Confirmation in three phases:

Phase 1 – Paperwork

Candidates’ families provide information needed to properly record Confirmation in the Sacramental Registry. Your name will be included in this entry as a sponsor. Candidates also choose a Confirmation Saint to be their heavenly sponsor. Candidates also complete the Strengths Explorer assessment from Gallup to help identify the gifts and talents with which God created them. The grace of Confirmation will build on these natural gifts to equip each Candidate to fulfill their uniquely personal mission in life.

Phase 2 – Confirmation Prep Classes

Candidates attend a 6-session course designed to help them wholeheartedly renew the baptismal promises made by their parents and renewed in the Creed. Sponsors are encouraged to attend these classes with their Candidate when possible and to

discuss the classes with him/her when it is not possible to attend. See the Discussion Guides below for more information about the topics covered.

Phase 3 – Formative Experiences

Candidates attend certain events designed to help them explore their natural gifts and begin discerning God’s mission for them. As a capstone project, each Candidate writes a letter to the pastor summarizing their preparation process and requesting to be presented to the Bishop for Confirmation.

Sponsor’s Role in the Confirmation Prep Process

We encourage sponsors to be as involved in your Candidate’s preparation as possible. To that end, we provide you with the following points for discussion, taken from our Confirmation Prep Classes and from the Letter to the Pastor, to help you talk with your Candidate about his/her preparation. Even if you cannot discuss all these items with your Candidate, making the effort to have at least one substantive conversation with him/her about this process is incredibly important. If you only have one conversation, we strongly recommend discussing the content of the Letter to the Pastor.

Candidates’ Letter to the Pastor Guidelines

- Personal introduction including your name, what school you go to, and why you want to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- What is your Confirmation Saint Name, and why did you choose it? Why is this saint/name meaningful to you?
- The name of your sponsor and why you chose this person. What good Catholic qualities does this person possess that makes them a good sponsor?
- What service experience you participated in and what you learned from it.
- What receiving the sacrament of Confirmation means to you.
- At least one way you think God may be calling to you to use your Emerging Talents (Strength Explorer results).
- How you intend to be involved in the life of the parish after Confirmation (in addition to coming to Mass).

For guidance on more Candidate and sponsor discussion, we provide the following discussion questions taken from the 6-session Confirmation Prep Sessions.

Confirmation Session One – The Problem of Evil

1. Who or what in your life tries to blow you off course? What are the “evils” in your life?
2. Who in your life encourages you to do the right thing no matter what?

3. Describe a time when someone encouraged you to do the wrong thing. How did you handle it?
4. Who is someone (in your life, in the world, or from history) that you admire? What do you find most admirable about that person?
5. Do you know anyone who seems to be a truly happy person? What do you think makes them that way?
6. Talk about the Sponsor you have chosen or who you are considering. Why did you choose this person? (Sponsors, who did you choose as a sponsor, and why did you choose that person?)

Confirmation Session Two – God the Creator

If you have your Strengths Explorer results with you:

1. Candidate, think of two or three examples of something you did that you were proud of. When did this happen? Which of your talent themes can you see in this moment?
2. Candidate, read through your top theme description from your Top 3 Report while parent/sponsor writes down words and phrases that they have seen in action in the Candidate.
3. Parent/sponsor, describe how you have seen your Candidate use this theme in the past and recently referring to your notes from the first step.
4. Candidate, describe how you have seen yourself use this theme in the past and recently.
5. Candidate, what do you like best about this theme?
6. If time allows, repeat the process for your next theme.

If you do not have your Strengths Explorer results with you:

1. What has been the happiest moment in your life so far?
2. What has been the hardest moment in your life so far?
3. What do you really enjoy doing? What motivates you to get off the couch?
4. What thoughts fill your daydreams?
5. What is your lived experience of God to this point in your life?
 1. What is first memory/feeling about God, the Church, prayer, etc.?
 2. When did you feel closest to God? When did you feel furthest from God?
 3. Describe an event in your life when God played a major role.

Confirmation Session Three – Jesus and the Paschal Mystery

1. Who is Jesus to you? Who do you say he is?
2. What words best describe the roles Jesus plays in your life? (teacher, God, a character in a story, a mysterious figure, etc.)
3. What is the hardest thing for you to grasp about the Eucharist?
4. Have you ever gotten caught in a lie or exaggerated story? Would you be willing to be tortured and killed to keep that story going? Why or why not?
5. Who would you die for right now, if anyone? Why?

Confirmation Session Four – The Holy Spirit

1. Describe a time when you felt inspired. What was the occasion? What did you do with that inspiration?
2. What about your Top Three Emerging Talents inspires you?
3. Pick one of your Top Three Emerging Talents and read over the Action Items for Youth found in your Top 3 Report; what is one action item you will implement this week?
4. Pick one of your Top Three Emerging Talents and read over the Spiritual Growth Plan (handout on the table); what is one suggestion you can implement this week?
5. If you have selected a Confirmation Saint Name, what about that saint inspires you? (Sponsors, what Confirmation Saint Name did you choose when you received Confirmation?)

Confirmation Sessions Five – The Church

1. Who have been your spiritual coaches and mentors throughout your life so far?
2. Who can be a spiritual coach to you now? Sponsors, how can you take on the role of spiritual coach for your Candidate?
3. How can you build Christian community into your life? (i.e. join a small group, go to LifeTeen, attend Bible study at school, etc.)
4. What issues do you have with the Church? (teachings, practices, tone, etc.)
5. Who is Jesus to you? What words best describe the roles Jesus plays in your life? Can you give examples of how each role has played out for you? (things like friend, judge, Savior, helper, nothing at all, etc.)
6. Candidates, do you want to be confirmed in the Church the Jesus founded? If so, why? If not, what holds you back?

Confirmation Session Six – The Sacrament of Confirmation

1. Why do you want to be confirmed? Why do you think you are ready? What will Confirmation do for you?
2. Confirmation is “the sacrament of Christian maturity” (Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraph 1308). What does it mean to be spiritually mature?
3. Have you tried anything from the spiritual growth plan associated with your emerging strengths? If so, how has it been going? If not, when will you read it over and choose something? (This document will be emailed out as soon as this session ends)
4. What event in your life have you prepared for more than any other? How did the preparation help?
5. How has the way you pray and what you pray for changed over the past few weeks?

The Confirmation Liturgy

The Confirmation Liturgy is a normal Mass with the addition of four moments unique to Confirmation.

Presentation of the Candidates

After the Gospel, the Candidates will be formally presented to the celebrant for Confirmation. Different Bishops handle this part differently, but it always involves a formal statement from the pulpit that these Candidates have been prepared and are accompanied by a sponsor. Candidates will stand for this part, but sponsors remain seated. The homily follows the Presentation of the Candidates.

Renewal of Baptismal Promises

After the homily the candidates stand, and the celebrant asks them a series of questions taken from the wording of the Creed (i.e. Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth?). Candidates and the entire congregation respond, "I do."

Prayer for the Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Candidates remain standing while the celebrant prays over them for the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord (sometimes called wonder and awe).

Anointing with Chrism

Both Candidate and sponsor approach the celebrant, and the sponsor puts his/her right hand on the Candidate's right shoulder as a visible sign of lifelong support. The sponsor presents the Candidate to the celebrant by saying only the Candidate's Confirmation Name.

The celebrant dips his right thumb in the chrism and makes the sign of the cross on the Candidate's forehead.

Celebrant: be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Newly Confirmed: Amen.

Celebrant: Peace be with you.

Newly Confirmed: And with your spirit.

Mass continues with the intercessions and the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Beyond Confirmation

To fulfil your office as a sponsor, consider the following suggestions:

Pray regularly for your Confirmand.

We recommend a brief, daily prayer for your Confirmand. Less frequently, perhaps once a month on the same date as their Confirmation mass or once a year on the anniversary, offer a more intentional prayer, such as this one, adapted from the Prayer for the Gifts of the Spirit from the Confirmation Liturgy:

All powerful God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, by water and the Holy Spirit you freed your sons and daughters from sin and gave them new life. Send your Holy Spirit upon [Name of Confirmand] to be his/her helper and guide. Give him/her the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of right judgment and courage, the spirit of knowledge and reverence. Fill him/her with the spirit of wonder and awe in your presence. I ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Talk regularly with your Confirmand about his/her personal mission.

Point out the gifts and talents that you see emerging and the ways that he/she might use those. Ask what he/she thinks God might be calling him/her to do, and phrase it as a calling. Ask what he/she hears God saying in prayer and share what you hear in prayer as well.

Celebrate the Confirmation Anniversary.

This can be as simple as a phone call or a card in the mail. You might take your Confirmand out to dinner or to an event. You can have a Mass said for your Confirmand around the anniversary of his/her Confirmation. Showing that this is a special anniversary for you will reinforce how special it is to your Confirmand. You can use the anniversary as an occasion to discuss the topics in the item above.