

# **Confirmation**

## **Called to Serve**



**St. Anthony**  
**Sponsor/Candidate Guide**

**2011-2012**

## Prayer for Evangelization

Loving God,  
You called us each by name  
and gave your only Son to redeem us.  
In your faithfulness, you sent the Holy Spirit  
to complete the mission of Jesus among us.

Open our hearts to Jesus.  
Give us courage to speak his name to those  
who are close to us and the generosity to share his love  
with those who are far away.

We pray that every person throughout the world  
Be invited to know and love Jesus as Savior and Redeemer.  
May they come to know his all-surpassing love.  
May that love transform every element of our society.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Mary, Mother of the Church, pray for us.

St. Paul the Apostle, pray for us.

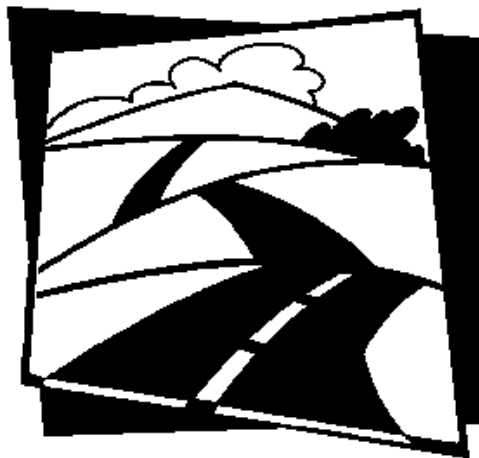
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“...Confirmed by the gift of the Spirit, that they give witness to Christ by lives built on faith and love...”

General Intercession from the Rite of Confirmation

**Congratulations!** You have been chosen by a young person for a special role. A wonderful adventure in the spiritual life awaits the two of you. As a Confirmation sponsor, you have accepted a responsibility that is an honor in our Church. Your role is to spiritually walk with the candidate during the preparation for the sacrament. You will be assisting the young person in being a true witness and disciple of Jesus, and representing the community when you present your candidate to the bishop. Your special role does not end at the Confirmation liturgy; you will help the young person fulfill his or her baptismal promises on their spiritual journey after Confirmation with the help of the Holy Spirit.





# What is Confirmation?

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## The Sacrament of Confirmation...

Welcomes us and deepens our belonging to the faith community  
Deepens our relationship to God, as Creator, Redeemer and Spirit  
Strengthens us as disciples

- **A sacrament is part of the way that God loves us and calls us.** A sacrament is God's love expressed as free, undeserved gift.

The Gift within Confirmation is that of strengthening us for discipleship and deepening our belonging to the faith community through the Trinity.

- **God uses invisible signs to communicate invisible love.** To communicate God's love God uses our senses: eyes, ears, touch, smell, and taste, and elements of our world.

In Confirmation, the signs we will celebrate include being anointed with oil and the laying on of hands as we remember the water of Baptism and the nourishment of Eucharist.

- **God calls and invites: we respond.** An attitude of openness communicates a "yes" to God's invitation to a deeper relationship. This "yes" does not mean we know we will always be faithful or that we are worthy of the gift. "Yes" means we are open to be strengthened by God who calls and loves us.

In Confirmation, we have the opportunity to say "yes" through the various responses in the prayer.

- **The community witnesses to and celebrates the sacraments.** A sacrament is a powerful sign that God is alive and present in the world. As Church, we are called to be sacrament, that is to be God's hand and healing touch in the world. At the same time, we celebrate the sacraments as our most important prayer. This community that celebrates sacraments is global, reaching to other faith communities throughout the world and joined in a common bond. The community of faith in families.

In Confirmation, the community witnesses our celebration and provides a sponsor who represents the love of the community for us.



# What Do Sponsors Do?

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We may agree that as adults in today's world we are used to being defined by what we do. In fact, this is a common first question we ask one another on first meeting. It is a comfortable way to initiate the small talk that at some point might evolve into a deeper conversation. Yes, as a Confirmation sponsor, you will have particular things "to do." These will include attending a rehearsal and walking with the candidate to the bishop. But you are about to embark on a journey with a young person. *What you do* is not the primary concern. This is a journey concerned less with what you do as a sponsor and more with who you are as a person of the Gospel. This journey will take you and your candidate to new exciting places in the life of faith. Faith penetrates the heart of the matter - how has faith penetrated who you are; can a young person read the Good News in the actions of your life?

## **Called to Relationship with Youth**

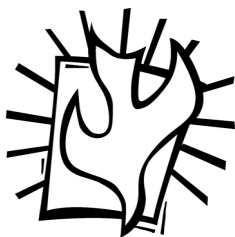
In your role as sponsor you are a minister with youth. This is about building relationships. These relationships allow young people to know adults who care about them and who are willing to walk as fellow pilgrims on a life-long journey of faith. A special young person has called you into deeper relationship. At the center of this relationship is our faith. And in a particular way, your unique ability to share your faith with this person is more important than the Confirmation program itself. This handbook strives to help you walk with your young person.

## **Nurturer & Supporter of Faith Growth**

You are one of the nurturers and supporters of faith growth for the Confirmation candidate. The integrity with which you live your faith and take care of its growth is as important as the walk in faith you are part of with this young person. You been chosen to share the fact that faith is a gift freely given by God, and that our response to that gift is the challenge of us all as members of the Body of Christ. Communicating with interest and excitement the challenge of living as Catholic's in today's world is a wonderful gift to share with youth. We hope that this handbook inspires you in your own spiritual journey.

## **Being Present**

Your presence in the life of the young person who has chosen you as sponsor is essential. You can be present in many ways. Your relationship has the potential for creating very sacred space between the two of you - holy ground. To walk on holy ground with a young person is indeed a blessing! This handbook will give you some practical tools for helping a young person grow in faith and at the same time challenge your own faith through the mutuality of the relationship.



## Twenty Tips Sponsors

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1. Participate with the young person in activities, i.e. take him or her to a movie and talk about it afterwards, or invite him or her on an outing such as biking, hiking, coffee, etc.
2. Establish a regular time to be with the young person as listener, sharer and co-traveler on the faith journey. Communicate that the friendship between the two of you makes a difference in your life.
3. Encourage the young person to keep a personal journal and share reflections of your own from daily life. Talk about current events and trends.
4. Be willing to enter into discussion with the young person about the differing values around us and affirm the healthy, life-giving choices of the young person. Model healthy, life-giving choices and relationships in your own life. Share stories of others, both current and of history, who have struggled with issues of personal integrity.
5. Recommend or even buy for the young person spiritual reading, "reflections for every day," that link faith to life.
6. Expose the young person to professional acquaintances in particular fields and vocations as he or she explores possible vocational choices.
7. Share with the young person significant moments in your faith life. Ask open-ended questions (why, how, where, when) that encourage the young person to explore how his or her faith is experienced in life.
8. Participate with young person in services activities together either for the community or the parish.
9. Advocate for the inclusion of the young person and his or her peers in leadership capacities at the parish, and become an integral part of the planning process for programs that involve them.

- 10.** Explore with the young person a variety of ways to pray. Meet with the young person and discuss the homily or what kind of homily they would write.
- 11.** Find five others who are going to pray for this young person.
- 12.** Create a prayer board for the young person's bedroom where he or she can put up names of people who are in need of prayer.
- 13.** Send a special card to the young person on the anniversary of their baptism.
- 14.** Reach out to the young person with a "good luck on the exam" or congratulatory message for a job well done via telephone call, text message or Facebook note.
- 15.** Support the young person's parent(s) with a listening, empathetic ear.
- 16.** Learn friends' names and inquire about them regularly. Invite the young person's friend(s) to join the two of you on an occasion or two. Prepare a special dinner before Confirmation for the young person and his or her friends. Find ways to include peers in making the Confirmation celebration more meaningful. Talk with him or her about the value and struggles of friendship.
- 17.** Take the young person to an experience at the parish like Generations of Faith, Stations of the Cross, etc.
- 18.** Share how your faith and experiences of Church have made a difference in your life - including the doubts and struggles you may experience.
- 19.** Pray for the young person and let him or her know about it.
- 20.** Ask the young person to pray for you.



# Building the Relationship One-on-One

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It is an honor to have been asked to be a sponsor for Confirmation. Now you are wondering not only “What are we going to talk about?” but more fundamentally, “How do I talk to a young person?” Communication skills are foundational to any relationship. What follows are some simple guidelines and practical ideas, which if followed, will greatly assist you to develop effective communication and have meaningful and fun conversations.

## **Be committed to communicate with the young person.**

Your presence and your faith story are gifts you give. The young person offers you a gift as well, through his or her self-disclosure.

- **Establish a pattern of regular contact.** This could be once a week phone call or a getting together for ice cream. *Minimally we ask that you get together once a month.* First and foremost, the young person needs to know you care and you want to be part of his or her life. He or she also needs to know that you take your role as sponsor seriously. This means you are willing to be present, that sometimes you will go out of your way to be where the young person is. You are willing to share your stories of life and faith, and to listen to him or her and help reveal God active in the day to day realities of being a teenager.

## **Communication is a revelatory process.**

As you and the candidate prepare for Confirmation and look forward to continuing the faith journey together afterwards, you will be sharing about yourselves. Your sharing communicates trust in the young person and a willingness to share your personal vulnerability.

- **In your regular contact with the candidate, share your feelings.** This can be as simple as telling him or her how you feel, and relating the various experiences of the day or week and how they have impacted you. Since these are your feelings use “I” statements rather than “you” statements. A simple and very effective formula is “ I feel (felt)....when....because....”
- **Express gratitude to the young person for listening to your story.** Let him or her know it makes a difference to you that you were able to share. “Thanks for listening. It’s great to be able to talk with you about my day.”

- **Be present in an active way to the young person's story.** This implies that you accept him or her "as is," you listen attentively, and you do not pass judgment on what is shared. This means that you "seek first to understand, then to be understood." Active, revelatory communication also implies that you offer suggestions but not advice. Remember, the young person is sharing who they are with you. It is an honor to enter into life's story with a youth. Here are some helpful hints on how to listen attentively:

1. **Share empathetic, reassuring reactions.** Another phrase for this is "reflecting feelings." To do this, pretend that you are a mirror and you are reflecting back what the young person has said so that you demonstrate understanding and acceptance. For example, "The frustration you feel from missing the deadline for that job application must be pretty intense."

2. **Remove any blocks that are communication hazards.** Trying to have a conversation while watching television or being online may not be the best idea. Environment can help facilitate communication or it can distract. Removing any visible barriers between you and the young person will aid in facilitating conversation as well.

3. **Listen attentively by clarifying the meaning of things that are shared.** These are called "reflecting skills." In addition to "reflecting feelings" mentioned above, you can "paraphrase," that is, give a concise response that states what you heard in your own words. Another skill is to "reflect meanings" by using the phrase, "You feel...because..." and to be open to clarification of your interpretation. "Summary reflections" are also very helpful. Here you give a summary of what you have heard. This is not a summary of the young person's thoughts; hopefully your reflecting gives the young person the opportunity to pull together a summary of his or her own.

## **Use effective skills for good communication.**

These skills include attending skills, following skills, and the reflecting skills mentioned above. Total presence with the young person shows that you care about him or her. Attending and following skills involve total presence.

- **Maintain a posture of involvement.** This posture includes a relaxed alertness which expresses the balance between "I feel at home with you and accept you" and "I sense the importance of what you are communicating to me and I am intent on understanding you." Inclining your body towards the young person indicates full attention, and maintaining an open position (arms and legs uncrossed) communicates receptivity. Placing yourself at eye level with the young person and facing him or her directly will alleviate the risk of seeming disinterested.

- **Use appropriate body motion.** How your body responds as you communicate with the young person speaks volumes. Your body can demonstrate empathy just by the way you position yourself as the young person talks. Avoid gestures and distracting movements that draw attention away from the conversation.
- **Use eye contact.** Our eyes are powerful communication tools. Use yours with the young person to communicate trust, eagerness to listen, and caring about him or her.
- **Create conversation starts with Door Openers.** One type of door opener describes the young person's body language, "You look like you're not feeling quite up to par." Another is offering an invitation to talk: "Do you want to talk about it?" Silence can also be a door opener. This gives the other person room, time and space to decide whether to talk, how to begin to talk, or even to decide what to say. The attending skills previously mentioned are door openers as well.
- **Interject minimal encouragers throughout the conversation.** Some examples are: tell me more, yes, I see, right, go on, for instance? Oh? Really? Then?
- **Ask open-ended questions.** Open-ended questions begin with what, where, how, and why. They help to stimulate conversation.



## **Sponsor/Candidate Get-togethers!**

### **First Meeting:**

Share one thing you don't think the other person knows about you.

How can you (the sponsor) be helpful during the following months?

How are you both going to commit to meeting every month? (set specific dates!)

Attending Mass is essential to the ongoing formation for everyone! How are you going to hold each other accountable to attending and participating every week?

Take time now to share at least 3 gifts you see in each other.

### **Second Meeting:**

What's been going on in both of your lives since you last saw each other?

Have you been helping each other attend Mass weekly? Perhaps you can go together or call each other after you've gone.

Share any service experiences you have completed.

What is one thing that bothers you about the Catholic faith? Or perhaps just something you have a question about?

### **Third Meeting:**

What's been going on in both of your lives since you last saw each other?

Name one struggle you (sponsor and teen) have faced in your faith journey. (could be issue with Church, doubt, death of a loved one, etc) What has helped you to work through that struggle?

What's one thing you (sponsor) wish you knew about God and faith when you were a teen.

What's one thing you (teen) wish adults knew about teens?

Share some recent acts of kindness that you have received or given.

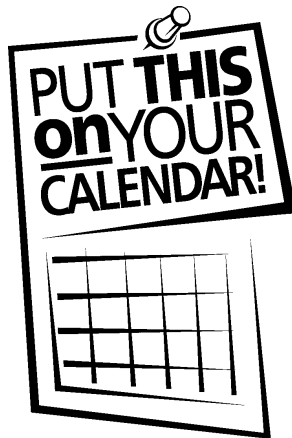
### **Fourth Meeting:**

What's been going on in both of your lives since you last saw each other? Are you stressed, tired, happy, worried, excited, etc.? Are you making time to be with the people you love?

Talk about one person (besides each other) that you really look up to.

How's your prayer life going? Have you tried any new forms of prayer? What struggles do you have with your prayer life?

In what ways is service an essential part of being Catholic?



### **Schedule for the Year:**

September 11	Candidate/Parent Session
October 12	Fall Speaker for High School Youth
<b>October 16</b>	<b><i>Rite of Enrollment (meet in OM at 10:00 )</i></b>
December 11	Poverty Simulation
January 18	Parent Meeting
<b>February 19</b>	<b><i>Candidate/Sponsor Gathering (11:30 OM)</i></b>
February 26, 29 or Mar 1	Attend a Generations of Faith Session
March 30-April 1	CONFIRMATION RETREAT