

CONFIRMATION HANDBOOK



2020-2021

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Welcome!

On behalf of the faith community of St. John XXIII, we are excited that you are here and ready to participate in this year's Confirmation Preparation Program. The purpose of the program is to assist you on your faith journey and to help prepare you for full membership in the Catholic Church. It is our hope that through this time of preparation you will freely desire the Sacrament of Confirmation and that you will commit yourself to follow the life of Christ serving the needs of others in our parish and community.

Therefore, we dedicate ourselves to helping young people be truly prepared, to go out and spread the Good News of Jesus Christ, to be able to practice our faith, beliefs, values and morals, to have an active, working knowledge of the many aspects of Catholicism, and to be responsible and responsive adult members of the Church of today and tomorrow. We are here to accompany you on this journey of discipleship not just during this time of preparation but for a lifetime of faith!

CONFIRMATION ELEMENTS

The key elements in preparation for the celebration of Confirmation are:

DISCERNMENT: What does it mean to say, "I'm ready to accept and live a Christian Catholic lifestyle?"

COMMUNITY: Am I an active part of my faith community?

CHRISTIAN MESSAGE: Are scripture and reflection important parts of my everyday life?

WORSHIP: Do I participate actively in liturgy and prayer?

SERVICE: Am I using my gifts and talents for the benefit of others?

Our goal is to help the students attain *their* goals. Our dream is to help the students reach *their* dreams. We aim for an environment in which they can experience the love of God, our Father, the humanness and care of Jesus, and to accept the creative challenge of growing in the Spirit of God.

This handbook was prepared to help you throughout the year. You will find guidelines to assist you in making the decisions you will be called upon to make. Please take a few minutes to read through it.

REQUIREMENTS FOR CONFIRMATION CANDIDATE

- The Confirmation Program is open to all who are at least juniors in high school and will be 16 years of age prior to the celebration of Confirmation.
- A Candidate must be a baptized Catholic or have been received into the Catholic Church.
- A copy of the Candidate's Baptismal certificate must be on file. If the Candidate was *not* baptized at Immaculate Conception, St. Peter of Alcantara or St. Mary's, please provide a copy of your Baptismal Certificate.
- The family of the Candidate must be registered members of St. John XXIII Parish or the Candidate must provide a letter of consent signed by the Pastor of the Candidate's home parish. A letter of consent gives permission for the Candidate to participate in Confirmation at St. John XXIII. A letter of consent should be addressed to Father Pat Wendt.
- Candidates must have been enrolled in either a Catholic parochial school or a parish Religious Education Program prior to entering immediate preparation for Confirmation.
- Attendance at all Confirmation sessions is essential and required. These dates are listed on the schedule. If a candidate must miss a session, make-up work will need to be completed.

- Service is an integral part of being a Catholic Christian. It is the way we express our commitment to living life in the Spirit of God alive within us. We use our giftedness to benefit others. All Candidates are required to participate in service ministry and reflect upon justice and service through the Matthew 25 Project.
- A Candidate must attend a Confirmation Retreat. Retreats provide an opportunity for prayer, reflection, friendship, and relaxation. The St. John XXIII Confirmation Retreat is scheduled for March 6-7 at the Daniel Soref Retreat Center.

THE SPONSOR'S ROLE

The support of the entire community is focused through the sponsor chosen by the Confirmation Candidate. The introduction to the Rite of Confirmation states: "Ordinarily, there should be a sponsor for each of those to be confirmed. The sponsor presents the Candidate to the minister for the anointing, and will later help the Candidate fulfill the baptismal promises faithfully under the influence of the Holy Spirit." Godparents at Baptism can be sponsors at Confirmation. In this way, the relationship between Baptism and Confirmation is retained.

- The sponsor need not be the same sex as the Confirmation Candidate and a Candidate may have more than one sponsor, although one should be designated as the liturgical sponsor who will present the Candidate for Confirmation.
- The sponsor must be sufficiently mature for the role, belong to the Catholic Church and have been initiated into the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist, and must not be prohibited by law from exercising the role of sponsor. The sponsor must be at least 16 years of age.
- Parents may not act as sponsors (Canon Law #874) but they may present their son or daughter to the Bishop for Confirmation. This is for two reasons:
 - 1) *The sponsor is seen as someone who shares with the parents in their obligation to bring up their child in the faith, especially in the event the parents are unable to perform this function.*
 - 2) *The sponsor represents the larger church - the entire community of believers.*

The sponsor should be someone who truly will support the Candidate in the desire to believe in Jesus Christ and to live out that belief in his or her daily life. The sponsor also must be willing to challenge the Candidate on un-Christian attitudes or actions when that is necessary, to pray with the Candidate, and to encourage the Candidate on his/her journey of faith. The sponsor witnesses, prays, and participates regularly in the celebration of the Mass and of the sacraments; is a real friend, someone who is "there" when needed; is a guide, a good "listener" who is ready to give advice when asked; one whose experience as a Catholic is an invaluable source for helping the Candidate to make decisions about his or her life as a Catholic. Practically speaking, this means that the sponsor must be someone with whom the Candidate can relate and also someone with whom the Candidate has regular contact during the preparation period.

Although a parent may not be a child's sponsor, it certainly seems reasonable to be a sponsor for your child's friend. We encourage you to look within the faith community for an appropriate sponsor.

We ask that each candidate choose his or her sponsor early. It is **expected** that the sponsor spend time with the candidate in at least one of the suggested activities. Sponsors are also asked to attend the candidate session on November 15, 2020 as well as the rehearsal on May 29, 2021.

THE PARENT'S ROLE

"As the primary educators of their children, parents along with sponsors are to be intimately involved in catechesis for Confirmation. This will help them renew and strengthen their own faith, besides enabling them to set a better example for their children." (*National Catechetical Directory*, no. 119)

Parents play a unique role in Confirmation preparation. For many years they have led their children through special moments of faith growth. While continuing to lead by the example of their own lives, parents now face the added challenge of granting their son or daughter a free choice in the decision to be confirmed.

We want parents to be very familiar with the components of the program, as well as the rationale. Some parents were confirmed under the "Old Rite", which differs significantly from the "New Rite". Age of the person, length of the preparation, involvement of Christian service, etc. are some areas of probable contrast. The responsibility here is different from earlier years, but in no way less important. Adult catechesis can be a powerful means to help the parent grow in faith and lay aside any doubts or fears about their children and Confirmation.

Parents can help their children in the following ways:

- Assisting their son or daughter in determining readiness. Parents should be informed of the criteria for readiness for reception of Confirmation, which includes involvement in all four elements of catechesis: community, worship, service, and message.
- Respecting the decision their son or daughter makes.

We also encourage parents to participate in the sessions and service projects. There is a specific **parent/child session scheduled for March 21, 2021.**

DETERMINING READINESS

Readiness for celebrating a sacrament cannot be determined simply by the calendar. The meaning of the Rite for those celebrating it and its total impact on their faith-lives will be strongly affected by many developmental factors besides age. These factors may include: the maturity of the candidates, the depth of their faith development, the degree of their commitment to Christ and to the faith-community, the level of their awareness of their religious realities, the extent of their involvement in community worship and service, and their knowledge and understanding of the basic teachings of the Church.

Because Confirmation celebrates the response of the individual to the gift of faith, the primary responsibility for determining when the candidate is ready for the sacrament lies within the individual candidates themselves. Because Confirmation is a sacrament of initiation, the decision is to be made in dialogue with the whole community, nevertheless, the community must show its

support, welcome the initiates, and sustain them in their decision so that it will be truly free. The adult community can do this by its own example of a living faith, by helping the candidate to make a serious and properly motivated decision, by offering a well-planned Confirmation program, by encouraging the candidates to participate in the program, and by praying with and for the candidates for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

It may well happen that a candidate will not feel ready to be confirmed. It is important that the candidate then does not feel somehow ostracized from the Catholic community or forgotten. That very important moment requires, on the part of the community and its representatives, understanding and support and continued contact with those making a decision to postpone Confirmation.

ATTENDANCE

Confirmation candidates are expected to attend *all* sessions. If a candidate cannot attend a session, please alert the Confirmation coordinator as soon as possible, but no later than one hour before the session is scheduled to begin. Candidates are also expected to be at the session on time; the same policy as above is to be followed.

Attendance and participation in the sessions is extremely important to the preparation of the candidates. If a candidate must miss a session, make up work will be assigned to ensure the candidate understands the material covered. Excessive absenteeism will be addressed by the coordinator, the candidate and his/her parents if necessary.

CONFIRMATION RETREAT

The Confirmation Retreat is a very important aspect of the Confirmation Program. A retreat is an Archdiocesan requirement. Perhaps one of the best ways to understand the importance of the retreat is to look at how it is modeled in the life of Jesus. In Scripture we see time and again that whenever Jesus had an important decision to make or challenge to face, he went away in quiet for awhile to gather his courage, regain his perspective and to be strengthened by his unity with the Father. (MT 4, LK 5:16, MK 6).

While the modern day retreat experience may differ from Jesus' style, the purpose remains the same. Over an extended period of time, away from schedules, tensions and a fast-pace life of activity, young people can get in touch with the deeper questions of life and find nourishment for their spiritual journey.

In a retreat setting, young people have an opportunity to EXPERIENCE what it means to be a member of a community. They will also have the opportunity to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The retreat center provides all the meals. Snacks may be brought in but only eaten in designated areas. Please refer to the handout and permission slip for more details.

If for some reason the candidate cannot join us on either retreat, arrangements must be made by the candidate to join a retreat from another parish.

LETTER TO THE BISHOP

In preparation for the ceremony of Confirmation, each candidate is required to write a letter to the confirming Bishop. The purpose of this letter is to give the Bishop an opportunity to find out a little about each candidate beforehand. It also allows the candidates the chance to communicate personally with the Bishop about his or her feelings, background and hopes about the church. From our experience, the Bishops really do read all the letters received.

CHRISTIAN SERVICE

You will recall that whenever service has been discussed, a definite number of hours were not specified. Christian service means more than just spending time doing a task. It involves prayer and reflection. Thus, we are asking you to complete a brief reflection on the service you participate in as well as a reflection on social action. More information on the service component can be found in the Matthew 25 Project packet.

The experience of Christian community flows naturally to service. Christ gives his people different gifts not only for themselves but also for others. Each must serve the other for the good of all. It is important, also, that you as Confirmation candidates see that these service experiences are not simply requirements to be confirmed but are our response to Christ's action and initiative in our lives. As such, service should become a way of life.

CONFIRMATION INTERVIEWS

As one of the final stages of the preparation process, candidates will be interviewed by a member of the Confirmation team to ensure understanding of the Sacrament and readiness. Honesty and sincerity are essential in these interviews. There is no wrong answer. The interviews will be scheduled as the date approaches.

REHEARSAL AND CEREMONY INFORMATION

The ceremony of Confirmation requires a brief rehearsal to ensure that it will run smoothly and meaningfully. All candidates and their sponsors are required to attend. It should not take more than an hour.

CONFIRMATION NAME

Candidates may use their baptismal name or another Christian name when receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation. A Christian name would be the name of a saint or blessed. Derivatives of names (Kelly for Catherine; Jenna for Genevieve) or Old Testament names are also appropriate. Candidates may use their first or second names if they are Christian names, or they may select a new Christian name. The candidate should know the relationship of the name to the religious Christian tradition. Exceptions can be made if a particular non-Christian or family name has significant meaning for a candidate that can be articulated to the Bishop. Most importantly, candidates should be encouraged to learn about their patron as part of their preparation for the sacrament and should particularly focus on the virtues of their patron they wish to emulate.

BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATES

Before you are confirmed, we must have your baptismal information. If you were baptized here at Immaculate Conception, St. Peter of Alcantara or St. Mary's Parish, your indication of such will suffice. If you were baptized at another parish, we need a **COPY** of your baptismal certificate. If you do not have your baptism certificate, call or write the church in which you were baptized and they will send you a copy. It is necessary for us to send notice of your Confirmation to the parish where you were baptized for their records and your certificate will have the address and date of your Baptism

Note: In case of bad weather, please tune in to local TV and radio stations for class cancellations. Information on cancellations will also be available at www.stjohn23rdyouth.org.

Students, if you are unable to attend a session, please call no later than one hour in advance.

**Maureen Rotramel
284-2102 or rotramelm@stjohn23rd.org**

Calendar

Orientation for Confirmation candidates, parents and sponsors (if available): October 11, 2020
6:30pm – 8:00pm at St. John XXIII - St. Peter of Alcantara Church

Sunday Sessions 6:30-8:00pm– Each session is for an hour and a half at St. John XXIII – St. Peter of Alcantara campus. Most sessions will begin in the Church, followed by small groups in the classrooms (room numbers will be given at first session) where we will dive deeper into the topic through various activities and discussions. We will end most sessions in the Church by exploring the various ways we have to pray as Catholics. Parents and sponsors are welcome to join us for any of the sessions, but especially for the prayer services at the end.

October 25	“What is Faith?”
November 15	“What Is Faith?” part 2– with sponsors
December 6	“What Do We Believe?”
January 10	“Who is Jesus?”
January 31	“What is Justice?”
February 14	“How Are We To Live?”
February 28	“What’s in a Name?”
March 6-7	Confirmation retreat “Gifted”
March 21	“What is a Relationship?” with parents
April 11	“What is Church?”
April 25	“What Is a Sacrament?”

Retreats at the Daniel Soref Retreat Center in Fredonia: March 6-7

**If you are unable to attend our retreat, contact Maureen as soon as possible to make arrangements to attend a retreat with another parish. The retreat is a required event and participants are expected to attend the entire retreat. DO NOT WAIT UNTIL MARCH TO LET US KNOW YOU CANNOT ATTEND. We are usually one of the last retreats so later options will be very limited!*

***Confirmation interviews** with Confirmation team will be scheduled on April 25 to be held on May 2 at St. Peter’s in the early afternoon

Confirmation Practice: May 29, 2021 at 6:30pm at St. John XXIII (tentative – time may change)

Confirmation: May 30, 2020 during 10:30am Mass; Bishop Haines presiding. Candidates and sponsors should arrive by 10:00am.

STUDENT CHECK LIST

Please have the following checklist completed before your closing interview:

Check List

- Have I attended Sunday Mass on a regular basis?
- Have I completed the registration forms?
- Do I have all my fees paid?
- Have I turned in my Baptismal Certificate?
- Have I chosen a sponsor? Who: _____
- Have I read the Confirmation Handbook?
- Have I handed in my retreat permission form? (due February 14, 2021)
- Have I written my letter to the Bishop? (due April 11, 2021)
- Who is my patron saint? _____ What is my Confirmation name? _____
- Did I turn my Confirmation name/patron saint in by April 11?
- Have I fulfilled my Matthew 25 Service Project requirements? (due April 25, 2021)
- If my sponsor was unable to attend the November 15th session, have I handed in the sponsor activity paper? (due April 25, 2021)
- Have I made a date for a personal interview (most will be May 2)?
- Have I completed an interview with a member of the Confirmation team?
- Have I attended all the sessions for Confirmation? For any sessions missed, have I completed and turned in the make-up work?