Confirmation Preparation

**A Guidebook for Confirmation**

**Candidates and Parents**

**St. Mary of Mt. Carmel/Blessed Sacrament Church**

**Utica, New York**

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**“…that their hearts may be encouraged as they are brought together in**

**love, to have all the richness of fully assured understanding, for the**

**knowledge of the mystery of God, Christ, in whom are hidden all**

**the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” Col. 2, 2-3**

**INTRODUCTION**

Welcome! We are looking forward to sharing with you this journey of faith as you prepare to receive the sacrament of Confirmation. As you will see, Confirmation preparation involves learning, sharing, serving, fellowship, spiritual growth and fun! You will be given the opportunity to learn more about your Catholic faith and what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

 Confirmation is the Sacrament in which one is enriched by the gift of the Holy Spirit and bound more perfectly to the Church. It strengthens us and obliges us to be witnesses to Christ by work and deed and to spread and defend the faith. It is the Sacrament in which one enters into full membership in the Catholic Church.

 Confirmation prefects Baptismal grace; it is the sacrament which gives us the Holy Spirit in order to root us more deeply as children of God, incorporate us more firmly into Christ, strengthen our bond with the Church, associate us more closely with her mission, and help us to bear witness to the Christian faith in words accompanied by deeds.

 Confirmation, like Baptism, imprints a spiritual mark or indelible character on the Christian soul; for this reason one can receive this sacrament only once.

 A Christian does not live as a child of God through his or her own efforts alone, but through the grace of God. We see this in a practical way when we look back on our own lives and the lives of others, even the lives of saints. Therefore, it is our duty to seek the grace that God offers us in order to live our lives as Christians in the way that God intends.

**WHO MAY BE CONFIRMED?**

Confirmation candidates :

* Are between the ages of 13-18 (ideally 10th or 11th grade)
* Have received the sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation and Eucharist
* Are practicing their faith
* Are in the state of grace
* Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the responsibilities of a member of the Catholic Church
* Are aware of the initiation aspects of the Sacrament of Confirmation and be committed to continuing the faithful practice and study of their religion
* ***Have a sincere desire to receive the sacrament*** as well as an appreciation of sacramental life.
* Are registered in the Faith Formation program

**CONFIRMATION CANDIDATES EXPECTATIONS**

* Participate in weekly Mass
* Participate in regular classes & the Direct Preparation classes in the weeks prior to Confirmation
* Answer the question regarding your desire to receive the sacrament of Confirmation
* Choose a qualified sponsor and *meet regularly with him/her*
* Write why you choose your sponsor (use form given in packet)
* Choose a saint’s name as your Confirmation name and write a biography about the saint (use form given)
* Participate in the Enrollment Mass
* Participate in the Parent/Sponsor/Candidate workshop
* Participate in the Confirmation retreat
* Be regularly involved with social justice activities
* Give service to the community and parish and write about them (use form given)
* Participate in the group service day and Penance Service
* Write a letter to the Bishop stating your reasons to be Confirmed
* Read the 3 assignments and reflectively answer the questions
* Participate in the Confirmation rehearsal
* Participate in the Confirmation liturgy

**EXPECTATIONS IN DETAILS**

 The following explains each of the Confirmation expectations in detail and in some cases, the reasons the requirements are important to the formation of the candidate. Please remember that while in many cases we list a minimum requirement for Confirmation, the candidates should be encouraged to make many of these activities a regular part of their religious practices.

**PARTICIPATE in Mass on Saturday evening or Sunday each week**

 The Confirmation candidate and his or her parents (along with the rest of the family) must have a sincere intention of participating in Mass every week. Participating in the Eucharistic life of the community is both a privilege and an obligation of Confirmed Catholics. This is also an important way that parents demonstrate to their children the importance they place on the faith they are handing on to their children. Worshipping as a community we build up the Body of Christ. If your family has not been attending Mass regularly in the past, we are confident that by doing so you will notice many benefits by the time Confirmation approaches.

**PARTICIPATE in Confirmation classes & Direct Preparation classes**

 Attendance in Confirmation classes and in Direction Preparation classes is extremely important in preparing the candidate for reception of the sacrament. When a class is missed, the candidate loses time for fellowship and prayer as well as the material covered that day. ***We expect that you will make these gatherings a priority and therefore make a sincere effort to adjust your other obligations accordingly***. Students are expected to be prepared for the classes, which includes completing any assignments when they are due. Contact your catechist or coordinator if you are not able to attend. When necessary the catechist will determine an appropriate at-home assignment so that the candidate does not fall behind in the lessons. ***Excessive absenteeism will affect the candidate’s ability to enter fully into this important period of preparation and jeopardize receiving the sacrament at this time. Please note that we are not denying his/her opportunity to receive the sacrament, we are merely postponing it until the student is fully prepared and willing to make the commitment. The door is always open.***

 ***If the candidate misses 1/3 of the classes, he/she will be asked to repeat the course and postpone receiving the sacrament with their class.***

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**CHOOSE a qualified sponsor and meet regularly with him/her**

 The confirmation sponsor should be a person who has been a strong role-model as a faith-filled Catholic. This person will be a companion in your faith journey and will vouch for your readiness to receive the sacrament.

 The sponsor should therefore be able to meet regularly with the candidate, spend time building a bond with the teen, help him/her prepare for the sacrament through prayer, study, service and discussion and be in physical attendance at the Enrollment Mass, rehearsal and the Confirmation. Attendance by proxy should be directed to the Faith Formation Coordinator.

 **THE SPONSOR:**

* must be a practicing Roman Catholic who attends Mass regularly and is living according to the teachings of the Catholic Church
* supports the person to be confirmed in their commitment to a Christian life
* must know the candidate and be willing to serve as a strong and long-lasting Christian influence on the candidate.
* must be fully initiated themselves, having received Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation
* must submit verification of membership in a parish **if** it is not St. Mary of Mt. Carmel/Blessed Sacrament Church. A letter from the parish where the sponsor is a member will be proof
* should be sufficiently mature in their own faith commitment
* may be either male or female for any candidate
* *may not be the parents of the candidate*
* assists in determining the candidate’s readiness for the sacrament
* attends the Enrollment Mass and workshop that follows
* attends the Confirmation rehearsal and ceremony.

**Full details regarding the sponsor are on an additional handout.**

**WRITE why you choose your sponsor**

It is important to choose a sponsor that you respect and feel that they will be a good companion to share your faith journey with. Fill out the form in the Confirmation folder to explain your reasons.

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**CHOOSE a saint’s name as your Confirmation name and write about them (use form given in packet)**

 In both the Old and New Testament, when God had a new mission for someone, He often gave them a new name. Even without a new name, your name has always told others who you are.

 God calls on each of us to fulfill a special mission. It may be converting non-believers, helping the poor, being a peacemaker or one of many other callings. Confirmation may be the continuation of a mission you began at Baptism, or the beginning of a new mission.

 Therefore, there are two options when deciding on a Confirmation name:

FIRST – Because Confirmation is the strengthening of the work that God began in your life at Baptism, you can use your Baptismal name for Confirmation. This shows the integral like between Baptism and Confirmation. (THIS ONLY APPLIES IF YOUR BAPTISMAL NAME WAS A SAINT’S NAME)

SECOND – Perhaps you see Confirmation as the beginning of a new mission for you and a fresh beginning in your faith journey. Then you may choose a new name for Confirmation. Your Confirmation name should be that of a saint you admire or the saint name of someone you know and look up to as a Christian role-model.

 There are many helpful websites available to assist you in gathering information about the saints. Just a few are:

 [www.catholicforum.com/saints](http://www.catholicforum.com/saints)

 [www.catholic.org/saints](http://www.catholic.org/saints)

 [www.catholic-pages.com/dir/saints.asp](http://www.catholic-pages.com/dir/saints.asp)

 [www.theworkofgod.org/saints](http://www.theworkofgod.org/saints)

 Once the candidate has chosen his/her Confirmation name, they must complete the form in the packet about that saint and hand it in at the assigned date.

**PARTICIPATE in the Enrollment Mass**

All candidates, parents, and sponsors should plan to attend the Enrollment Mass. The exact date is posted in the packet. During the Mass the candidates will declare their intent to seek the Sacrament of Confirmation with the parish community as witness and sign the Enrollment Book. The sponsor also commits their willingness to support the candidate. In return, the community agrees to support and pray for all those involved in this faith journey.

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**PARTICIPATE in the parent/sponsor/candidate workshop**

 The candidate, parent(s) and his/her sponsor must attend the workshop together following the Enrollment Mass. The purpose of the workshop is to bring everyone together to begin their mission and begin to build their bond as partners in faith.

**PARTICIPATE in the Confirmation retreat and Mass**

A Saturday *or* Sunday afternoon is set aside before Confirmation for the candidates to participate in a Confirmation retreat led by a reputable presenter who will provide the candidates with activities for deepening their faith, sharing time with their friends and preparing for the sacrament of Confirmation.

 If the retreat is local, a Mass will be included and parents and sponsors can join us.

If the retreat is taking place off campus, then only the candidates need to attend the liturgy.

**BE regularly involved with social justice activities and give service to the community, parish, and write about it.**

An awareness of the importance of and vital need for performing service to others is critical in preparing the candidate for Confirmation. Throughout Scripture we are called to love our neighbors and stand up for justice and peace. Since service and justice are so important to who we are as Catholic Christians, we ask that the candidates make his/her service projects a priority. Serving others is not something we do “to get it over with”. It is something we do because we recognize the presence of Jesus in all persons and in all of God’s creation. Therefore it is encouraged that the candidates get involved in service activities which become a regular commitment whenever possible.

 *The candidates need to complete a minimum of 20 hours and complete 1 write-up about their activities (use forms in the packet).*

Some things to think about when considering your service are:

* What are people’s needs or problems and what can I do to help?
* Who needs time, effort, work or service from me?
* What unique gifts or talents has God given me that can be used to serve others?

Once you identify where service is needed, make specific plans on your own to follow through with those commitments or sign up for the many opportunities provided in our own parish.

**PARTICIPATE in the Group Service Day**

There will be a Saturday or Sunday in the spring that is designated as our group service day. Sites will be set up for candidates to go out and practice what Jesus wanted us to do…”Whatever you do for the least of my brothers, you do for me…”

 Sites such as Hope House, Rescue Mission, nursing homes and making Easter baskets for the children of the Thea Bowman House are such examples of service that we perform on that day.

 We also have set aside time to discuss our service sites, what we did and how it impacted our lives. Hearing what others did allows us to learn more about our community and its needs.

**PARTICIPATE in a Penance Service**

A penance service will be scheduled at some point before receiving the sacrament of Confirmation for the candidates. Parents and sponsors are welcome to join us for the Penance Service.

**WRITE a letter to the Bishop stating your reasons to be Confirmed**

 It has been customary for the Bishop to request that each candidate write a personal letter to him requesting Confirmation. The students have more specific details and information about this letter in the packet.

 A group letter will also be written in class if the Bishop requests it.

**READ and answer the 3 assignments included in the folder.**

 There are 3 assignments included in this folder. You are to read them and answer the questions on the sheet provided OR email your answers to aelacqua@syrdio.org. Please think about your answers and write in full sentences.

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**PARTICIPATE in the Confirmation rehearsal**

All candidates and their sponsors *MUST* attend the Confirmation rehearsal which is typically a few days before the Mass. Exact dates will be given once we are told our Confirmation day and time.

**PARTICIPATE in the Confirmation liturgy**

Confirmation will be in the spring. The exact date will be announced. Participation in the liturgy is expected.

 The candidates will also have input in the creativity of the ceremony as we value their ideas. Class time during Direct Preparation will be used to make the ceremony personal to reflect the candidates.

 They will have opportunities to fully participate in the Mass and share their faith with their family and faith community.



“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 them to be their Helper and Guide. Give them the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of right judgment and courage, the spirit of knowledge and reverence. Fill them with the spirit of wonder and awe in your presence.”

-Rite of Confirmation 25

**ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS**

 “As the primary educators of their children: parents are to be intimately involved in the catechesis for Confirmation. This will help them renew and strengthen their own faith, besides enabling them to set a better example for their children.” (NCD, no. 119)

*BECAUSE PARENTS:*

Are the primary educators of their children

 Are responsible for initiating their children into the sacramental life

 Serve as models for their child by being committed Christians

**PARENTS SHOULD EXPECT TO:**

* Write you answer to the parent question that is included in the folder
* Worship with your families regularly
* Be actively involved in the Confirmation preparation of the candidate
* Engage in discussions about the material being studied including sharing your understanding and perspective
* Encourage your child to reflect and thoughtfully consider the decision to receive the sacrament of Confirmation
* Pray for your child’s spiritual growth every day
* Support and encourage completion of assignments, activities and expectations
* Emphasize the importance of the sacrament of Confirmation by taking an active part in the celebration of Confirmation
* Assist in retreats, service work, meetings/workshops, events IF ASKED
* Faithfully bring your teen (and when necessary yourself) to meetings, programs, and events that are planned to help your child prepare for the sacrament of Confirmation.

IF you have any questions, concerns or need any further information or clarification, please contact the Faith Formation Coordinator at 724-3950

*May God Bless you and your child on this wonderful journey*

*to deepen and grow in the faith of our Catholic Church.*