August 2026

Dear Parishioners,

Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit! Those amazing words were recited over each of us when we received our Confirmation. To seal something is to protect it, to galvanize it, and to make it ready for duty "in the field". And that is what Confirmation does – it prepares us to take our rightful place as mature Christians in the world, ready to serve and fight and suffer and even die out of love for our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Our parishes run a joint Confirmation program as a way to prepare our young people for the incredible graces of this sacrament. After a period of discussion and discernment last summer, we as pastors have decided on some significant changes to the way this program is run. In this letter, we want to communicate these changes to you so that potential candidates for Confirmation can know what to expect as we begin this new program this fall.

What has changed in the Confirmation program?

In past years, Confirmation has been a program which begins in the 7th grade and culminates with receiving the sacrament towards the end of 8th grade. Now, we are opening youth Confirmation to any parishioner between the ages of 13-17. Any youth falling in this range may request to become a candidate for Confirmation at any age that they feel they are ready. The candidate will first have an interview with Anna Albrittain, our Confirmation coordinator, who will discern along with the candidate if this seems to be the right time for the sacrament. If so, the candidate will be invited to take an 8-session course focusing on the sacrament. If not, we will invite the candidate to continue to learn and mature in the faith, and to apply again when they feel they are ready.

What are the expectations for a Confirmation candidate?

- Evident desire to receive the sacrament
- Regular participation in the sacramental life (weekly Mass, Confession 2-4 times a year)
- A consistent prayer life, even in rudimentary form
- Basic knowledge of the Catholic faith
- Continuing faith formation (CCD, Catholic school, verified homeschool program, youth ministry, personal reading, etc.)

Applicants who do not yet demonstrate these qualities will be given a "personalized plan" to prepare them to apply again for a future session. This may consist of catechesis, personal reading, or encouragement to consistent sacramental participation.

Why have we made these changes?

We see three main advantages to this new model:

- ***No longer "one size fits all".*** We have come to recognize that a "one size fits all" model for Confirmation is not helpful when applied across the board. Everyone knows that youth mature at different rates physically and psychologically, and the same is true spiritually. Some students are ready in the 8th grade, others before, and others after. We want to confer

the sacrament according to the candidate's disposition to receive it, not according to an artificial timeline that does not respect the variety of children's religious experience.

- ***The sacramental fruits of desire.*** The graces of any sacrament grow according to the disposition of the receiver. Candidates must show a demonstrated desire to receive the Holy Spirit in Confirmation by their participation in parish life, and a life of prayer. Since all candidates demonstrate this desire together, we expect they will encourage one another during their time of Confirmation preparation as iron sharpens iron.
- ***Confirmation is not graduation.*** We hope to break the perceived connection between Confirmation and 8th grade graduation, as though growing in our faith is something that ends upon entering high school. Confirmation in a sense is just the start of the journey – not the end! Further, candidates will now share their Confirmation preparation not with those of their same grade (often their school friends), but rather with a wider variety of ages. They will learn to grow in faith with a diverse group of fellow believers, thus preparing them better for mature integration into the larger parish community.

Please see the handbook which accompanies this letter for details about this program. We believe that this new Confirmation program will better prepare our youth for a lifetime of service to Christ and his Church, now sealed and strengthened by the Holy Spirit who first ignited the flame of faith in our hearts.

Rev. Scott Woods
Pastor, Sacred Heart, St. Catherine's, St. Ignatius Hilltop

Anna Albrittain
Youth Confirmation Prep Coordinator
240-901-2254
aalbrittain@sacredheartlaplata.org

YOUTH CONFIRMATION PREP PROCESS

FOR YOUTH AGES 13-17

1 EVALUATE YOUR READINESS

Initial expectations for Confirmation candidates:

- *Evident desire to receive the sacrament*
- *Regular participation in the sacramental life (weekly Mass, Confession 2-4 times a year)*
- *A consistent prayer life, even in rudimentary form*
- *Basic knowledge of the Catholic faith*
- *Continuing faith formation (CCD, Catholic school, verified homeschool program, youth ministry, personal reading, etc.)*

2 INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS

Potential candidates are to contact Confirmation Prep Coordinator Anna Albrittain to schedule their meeting.

Office Email: aalbrittain@sacredheartlaplata.org; Office Phone: 240-901-2254

3 MASS OF COMMITMENT

Candidates, accompanied by a parent, guardian, or sponsor, will publicly commit to the Confirmaiton Preparation process.

4 ATTEND CLASSES & COMPLETE ASSIGNMENTS

Candidates who are accepted will attend 8 preparation classes, and complete various assignments such as choosing their saint and sponsor.

5 WORKS OF MERCY PROJECT

Candidates will complete works of service based on the Corporal & Spiritual Works of Mercy. They will select and attempt to complete 2 Corporal & 2 Spiritual Works of Mercy, striving for about 12 hours of service total. Afterwards, they will answer reflection questions about their experience.

6 RETREAT

Candidates will attend a Confirmation Retreat.

7 CONFIRMATION

Candidates who successfully complete all of the above requirements will receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Youth Confirmation Policies

Continuing Faith Formation

Confirmation Prep a separate program from parish CCD, youth ministry, Catholic school or homeschool curriculum. It is meant to specifically teach what is needed to receive and live out the Sacrament of Confirmation. However, in order to be considered ready for the sacrament, a candidate needs to demonstrate both a basic understanding of the Catholic faith and the intention to continue their personal faith formation (through CCD, Catholic school, a verified homeschool program, youth ministry, personal reading, etc.). If a candidate has significant gaps in their knowledge of the faith, or is not continuing their faith formation outside of Confirmation prep, they will be given a "personalized plan" to prepare them to apply again for a future session. This may consist of catechesis, personal reading, encouragement to consistent sacramental participation, etc.

Attendance

Candidates are required to attend all 8 sessions, plus the Confirmation retreat. All missed sessions must be made up by setting up a meeting with one of the Confirmation Prep leaders – coordinator, priest, or approved adult volunteer – to make up the session.

Fee

We ask for a $50 fee when candidates enroll in our preparation program. This fee covers resources, materials, and a Confirmation retreat. This can be paid by cash/check (made out to Sacred Heart) in the Sacred Heart office, or, if available at the time, online. If you cannot pay the fee, please speak to the pastor.

Electronic Devices

Cell phones must be silenced and put away unless otherwise instructed. If a candidate is seen using their cell phone, headphones, etc. during a session, they will get one warning and be asked to turn the device off and put it away. If they are seen a second time, their device will be taken by a leader and stored away until the end of the session. Other devices like handheld game devices should not be brought to Confirmation Prep classes, retreat, etc.

Accountability

Candidates are also expected to have a consistent sacramental life: faithfully attend Sunday Mass weekly and going to Confession at least 2-4 times a year. There is no tracking to hold candidates accountable to this expectation, but if it becomes clear that they are not attending Mass their reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation will be delayed until they are able to regularly do so.

Behavioral Expectations

Confirmation Prep is meant for those who desire to receive the sacrament. This is indicated in their initial meeting with the coordinator and priest, in their behavior in class, and in their diligence in their assignments, which are meant to help them understand the sacrament better and also prepare them to live out the graces of the sacrament. If a candidate behaves in such a way that is disruptive, disrespectful, or otherwise implies that they do not desire the sacrament or are not attending preparation of their own free will, they and their parent/guardian will be required to meet with their pastor to discern if they should continue preparation.

Important Confirmation Dates 2026-2027

Individual Meetings: Now until October 26
Candidates are required to meet with the Confirmation prep coordinator before the start of classes. Schedules permitting, one of the priests will join this meeting.

Class Dates: Tuesdays 7-8:30pm, located at the IHM House at 106 Port Tobacco Rd (old convent next to ANS)

1. October 27
2. November 10
3. December 1 – Sponsor Form & Interview due
4. January 12 – Saint Paper due
5. January 26
6. February 16
7. March 2 – Letter to the Bishop due
8. March 16 – Candidate Info Form & Works of Mercy Project Reflection due

If class needs to be canceled due to inclement weather, illness, etc., we will add a class to the calendar on these dates as needed: November 17, January 19, February 23, April 6.

Assignments: Assignments are included in this handbook, and details are given in class. Assignments can be turned in earlier than the due date – make sure candidate's name is on it!

Mass of Commitment:

Sacred Heart Candidates: Sunday, November 22
Sacred Heart candidates, along with a parent, guardian, or sponsor, will attend a reflection **at 11:20am in the Sacred Heart Friendship Room, followed by attending the 12noon Mass together**. At this Mass, candidates will be called forward with either a parent, guardian, or sponsor, and will publicly commit to the Confirmation preparation process. (Arrive early if you want Community Sunday donuts!)

St. Catherine's/St. Ignatius Hilltop Candidates: To Be Determined
Candidates from St. Catherine's and St. Ignatius Hilltop will schedule the day of their Commitment Mass when the pastor.

Retreat: February 19-20 or March 12-13 (date finalization & details coming soon).
The retreat is required for every candidate. If parents do not wish for their child to stay overnight, arrangements must be made for them to attend as much of the retreat as possible. (Contact Fr. Scott with any concerns.) Candidates who miss the retreat due to illness, family emergency, prior commitment that cannot be moved or missed, etc., will be required to make up the retreat, to be discussed with the coordinator.

Confirmation Rehearsal: Saturday, April 10th at 6:30pm at Sacred Heart (in the church)
Sponsors should be in attendance with their candidate. If a sponsor cannot attend the rehearsal, and parent/guardian must stand in their place and relay any pertinent information.

Confirmation Mass: Sunday, April 11th at Sacred Heart 12:00noon Mass with His Excellency, Bishop Juan Esposito-Garcia. Candidates & sponsors will need to arrive no later than 11:30am in the Friendship Room (arrival time subject to change).

Sponsor Certification Form

Candidate's Name (Please Print)

Candidate's Invitation

As I begin my journey in preparation for Confirmation, I invite you to become my Sponsor, knowing that you'll be my friend and spiritual guide.

Sponsor's Pledge

I pledge that I am a practicing Catholic in good standing, which means I strive to live my life in a manner that is wholesome and in accord with the moral teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. Moreover, I am in the practice of fulfilling my Sunday Mass obligation on a regular basis. I have been baptized and confirmed, and after prayerful consideration, I am willing and eager to guide this candidate. I realize my life must be a testimony of my commitment to the Lord and to the Church. If it becomes necessary, I will be responsible for the further religious education of the candidate.

Sponsor's Name (a confirmed, practicing Catholic, at least 16 y.o. and not the candidate's parent)

Sponsor's Signature

Sponsor's Home Parish

Sponsor's Phone Number

Sponsor's Email Address

Pastor's Certification (from Sponsor's home parish)

I certify that this person is a member of the Roman Catholic Church in good standing, and not bound by any canonical penalty, and is thereby eligible to be a sponsor for Confirmation.

Pastor's Signature _____

PARISH SEAL

Name of Parish_____

TO BE SUBMITTED TO:
Sacred Heart Church
Attn: Anna Albrittain
205 St. Mary's Ave
La Plata, MD 20646

Sponsor Interview Questions

Turn in a copy of answers, handwritten or typed.

1. What is your faith backstory? How did you become Catholic? Tell me about how you first learned about the faith.

2. Who did you choose for your Confirmation saint? Why?

3. Do you have a favorite saint? Why are they your favorite? What about them that has helped you on your faith journey?

4. Do you have a favorite Bible passage, verse, or story? Tell me about it and why it is your favorite.

5. How do you define the word "holy"? What challenges do you face when trying to live a life of holiness?

6. Tell me about an experience when it was difficult to be Catholic. How did you resolve this difficulty?

7. Tell me about an experience when you loved being Catholic. How did that experience impact you?

8. What has been your experience with the sacrament of Reconciliation? Is it difficult for you to go to this sacrament? How do you prepare?

9. What has been your experience going to Mass? Have you ever not liked going to Mass? Do you enjoy going to Mass? How does going to Mass impact you?

10. Do you participate in service or volunteering at your church? Describe what you do and how it impacts your life.

11. How do you pray? Do you have a favorite place to pray, a favorite time to pray, or a favorite way to pray? Do you ever find it difficult to pray?

12. Has there ever been a time in your life when you felt really close to God? Tell me about it.

13. Has there ever been a time when you struggled to believe in God? Tell me about it and how you sustained your faith during that difficult time.

14. Who has been a good role model in the faith for you? What have they taught you? How have they helped deepen our faith?

15. In what ways do you think you still need to grow in your Catholic faith?

16. What do you think is one of the greatest challenges to being Catholic?

17. What do you think is the best thing about being Catholic?

Confirmation Saint Paper

Names are a sign of power. When you were baptized, all sin was forgiven *in the name of* the Father, of the Son, and the Holy Spirit. You were given a "Christian" name – the name of one of the saints or heroes of the Bible, for example, who became your "patron." You can find many examples in the New Testament of the Apostles curing and forgiving in the name of Jesus. And you might remember Bible stories in which a person's name was changed to show that they had entered into a new relationship with God – Simon became Peter, Saul became Paul, etc. Your Confirmation is an opportunity to enter into a deeper relationship with God and with the Church. One Confirmation custom is to choose a new name to symbolize this relationship. This "Confirmation name" is used in the rite of Confirmation, when the bishop will ask for your name.

The particular saint's name chosen will represent the direction you feel your faith life is taking, or will represent a strength or attribute you feel you need. It is important and necessary to learn something about the saint you choose before you decide on that name. (This option of taking a new name is *not* to be used because you like the sound of the name, how it fits with your other names, nor because it is the name of a nice friend or relative.)

Here are some questions to ask yourself to guide your search. Use your answers to find a saint who is like you based on your interest or struggles, or a saint with qualities you admire, or a saint you feel called to learn from or imitate.

1. How would your friends describe you?
2. What are you passionate about?
3. Who in your own life do you look up to or admire most, and why?
4. What is something you are struggling with right now?
5. What do you want to be known for?
6. Where do you feel closest to God?
7. Where do you feel called to serve others?

In your paper, include the following:

1. Which saint have you chosen for your Confirmation name and **why**?
2. What is the feast day of your chosen saint? Are the they patron saint of anything? Are there any symbols associated with them and why?
3. A brief biography of your saint – when they lived, family life, occupation, death, etc.
4. How your saint served God and how they practiced their faith in their life.
5. Bonus: Include a picture of your chosen saint.
6. Bonus (Part 2): Include an intercessory prayer to your saint, or a favorite quote by your saint.

Must be **typed** – and don't forget to include **your** name at the top! Do **not** copy and paste information from a website – that is *plagiarism*. In addition, the information must be **specific**, not so vague and general that it could be about any saint.

Helpful Links

- "Find YOUR Saint": https://lifeteen.com/blog/find-your-saint/
- "Saints A to Z": https://www.catholic.org/saints/stindex.php
- "Biggest and Best List of Confirmation Saints (For Guys and Girls)": https://lifeteen.com/blog/biggest-best-list-confirmation-saints-guys-girls/
- "How to Choose a Confirmation Saint (With Saint Suggestions!)" https://focus.org/posts/how-to-choose-a-confirmation-saint-with-saint-suggestions/
- "How To Choose A Confirmation Saint (Over 215 Saint Ideas!)" https://ascensionpress.com/blogs/articles/how-to-choose-a-confirmation-saint-over-215-saint-ideas
- "Find Your Confirmation Saint" https://mycatholicguide.com/confirmation-saint

Letter to the Bishop*

The purpose of this letter is to introduce yourself to the Bishop, to assure him you are asking for this sacrament freely, and to relay your Confirmation Preparation experience to him. It is his way of seeing how well you are prepared to receive the sacrament of Confirmation, and a chance to "meet" you before administering the sacrament.

This letter is to be typed. It does not have to be any longer than one page, as long as you follow the basic prompts below:

- Address the letter "Dear Bishop"
- Introduce yourself and request the sacrament. Indicate that this is your decision and that the sacrament is one that you want to receive.
- Describe how you have prepared for the sacrament, such as prayer, study, classes, service, receiving other sacraments.
- Explain why you chose the Confirmation/saint name that you did.
- Relate how you have accepted the responsibility of living a Christian life through service to God and to others. Also describe how you plan to make the gifts of the Holy Spirit you will have strengthened at Confirmation a part of your life in the future.
- Conclude your letter and thank the Bishop.
- Sign your letter.

*In cases where it is the pastor who is going to be the one confirming you, write the letter to him instead of the Bishop.

Candidate Information Form

Information on this form is used to complete the sacramental records of the parish as well as prepare your confirmation certificate and other items for the Mass. If you wish to change any information you must submit a new form. Changes may not be made within 30 days of Confirmation. If you do not have this information, contact the church of your baptism. **If you were baptized at a different church, attach a copy of your baptismal certificate.**

Candidate's Full Name as it should appear on the certificate:

_____

Confirmation Saint Name Chosen:

_____

Candidate's Month, Day, and Year of Birth: _____

Father's Full Legal Name: _____

Mother's Full Legal Name: _____

Mother's Maiden Name:_____

Current Residence: _____

_____

Candidate's age at Confirmation: _____ Date of Baptism: _____

Church of Baptism:

_____

Street Address of Church of Baptism:

_____

Confirmation Sponsor's Name

_____

Works of Mercy Project

Part 1: Identify 2-4 examples for each Work of Mercy. (Will be explained in class.)

For example, for Feeding the Hungry: Volunteering at food pantry, making meals for homeless shelters, helping prepare meals for my family, organizing a food drive.

Part 2: Choose 2 Corporal & 2 Spiritual Works of Mercy to act upon, and explain how. Commit about 3 hours for each, to be done all at once or spread out. (Must be approved by instructor.)

For example, for Pray for the Living & Dead: committing to 3 holy hours, or praying 10 min each day for about 3 weeks for the intentions of others.

Part 3: Attempt to complete your chosen Works. Afterwards, answer some reflection questions and submit to instructor by the final class.

We do not require perfection, just genuine effort to learn and to serve, to try to grow in love and in mercy so that we can be more like Jesus.

Works of Mercy Project Part 1

FEED THE HUNGRY	GIVE DRINK TO THE THIRSTY

SHELTER THE HOMELESS	CLOTHE THE NAKED	VISIT THE SICK

VISIT THE IMPRISONED	BURY THE DEAD

List 2-4 actions for each Corporal Work of Mercy that either you personally can accomplish or that a community can provide.

Works of Mercy Project Part 1

INSTRUCT THE IGNORANT	COUNSEL THE DOUBTFUL

ADMONISH SINNERS	FORGIVE OFFENSES	COMFORT THE AFFLICTED

BEAR WRONGS PATIENTLY	PRAY FOR THE LIVING & DEAD

List 2-4 actions for each Spiritual Work of Mercy that either you personally can accomplish or that a community can provide.

WORKS OF MERCY PROJECT
PART 2 - ACTION PLAN

YOUR NAME:

Make a realistic plan, choosing two Corporal and two Spiritual Works of Mercy (four total!) that you will complete. Your should strive for about 3 hours for each Work, completed at all once or spread out over several days or weeks. (Work done in preparation for service can be included in this time frame.) Using the boxes below, identify each Work of Mercy you will be acting on and describe your action plan in detail, including times/dates if appropriate. **This worksheet must be seen and approved by your instructor before continuing the project.**

CORPORAL WORK OF MERCY 1:

CORPORAL WORK OF MERCY 2:

SPIRITUAL WORK OF MERCY 1:

SPIRITUAL WORK OF MERCY 2:

WORKS OF MERCY PROJECT
PART 3- REFLECTION

After you have completed each of your 4 Works of Mercy, answer the following questions to reflect upon your experience. **Use a separate paper, or type and print your answers.**

1) On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very easy, how easy or difficult was completing each of your Works of Mercy? Explain what made it easy of difficult.

2) After completing the project, is there anything you would have done differently? Explain.

3) What did you learn from completing this project?

4) How will you use what you have learned after Confirmation?

Submit your answers by the final class.