



August 2023

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 the pastor and 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?

- Between 13-17 years old (with some exceptions)
- 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.

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 301-934-9630
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 Youth Confirmation Prep Coordinator
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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

ENTRY INTERVIEW

Potential candidates are to contact their parish office to schedule their entry interview with their pastor and the Confirmation Prep Coordinator.

Sacred Heart: 301-934-2261

St. Catherine/St. Ignatius: 301-934-9630

St. Mary's Newport: 301-934-8825

3

ATTEND SESSIONS & COMPLETE ASSIGNMENTS

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

4

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.

5

RETREAT & INTERVIEW

Candidates will attend a Confirmation Retreat and have a final interview before receiving the Sacrament.

6

CONFIRMATION

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

Important Confirmation Dates 2023-2024

Interviews: Sept 4 – October 13, 2023

Due to the busy schedules of our priests, it is recommended to schedule your interview sooner than later, otherwise they may not be able to meet with you before classes start.

Meeting Dates: Tuesdays 7-8:30pm, located at the CCYM House (old convent next to ANS)

Session 1: October 24

Session 2: November 7 – Confirmation Saint Paper due

Session 3: November 21

Session 4: December 5 – Sponsor Certification Form due

Session 5: December 19

Session 6: January 23 – Letter to the Bishop due

Session 7: February 6

Session 8: February 20 – Candidate Info Form due

Other Important Dates:

Retreat: Saturday, October 21 at St. Ignatius Hilltop (6455 Port Tobacco Rd): late morning – early evening, exact times to be announced.

The retreat is required for every candidate. Candidates who miss the retreat due to illness, family emergency, etc. will be required to make up the retreat, to be discussed with the coordinator. If too many candidate cannot attend, the retreat will be rescheduled.

Confirmation Commitment (Sacred Heart candidates only): Sunday, October 15 @12noon Mass. Both the candidate and a parent, guardian, or sponsor must attend. If unable to attend, another one will be scheduled. A brief explanation will be given 10 minutes before Mass in the Friendship Room.

Works of Mercy Project: Final Reflection due by March 27

Confirmation Rehearsal: Either Thursday, April 25 or Friday, April 26 (exact date will be sent when details are finalized)

Confirmation Mass: Saturday, April 27 @ 12noon

Assignments:

Instructions for all assignments given can be found throughout the rest of this handbook. They are due by the dates given above, but can be turned in earlier if completed earlier. Always make sure your name is on the assignment.

Youth Confirmation Program 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, either by attending the next time the same session is offered next season or by setting up a meeting with one of the Confirmation Prep leaders (pastor, coordinator, or approved adult volunteer) to make up the session.

Fee

We ask for a \$75 fee when candidate 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 your pastor.

Cell Phone/Music Devices

Cell phones and music 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.

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 interview, 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.

Confirmation Saint Paper

Almost everyone has at least two names: a first name and a last name. Your first name tells others who you are. Your last name tells others what family you belong to.

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 he or she 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. You may even choose your baptismal name, because there is a close relationship between Baptism and Confirmation.

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.)

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 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 called *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/>
- “How to ‘Choose’ a Patron Saint”: <https://www.catholiccompany.com/getfed/how-to-choose-a-patron-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/>
- “7 Epic Saint Stories”: <https://epicpew.com/7-epic-saint-stories/>
- You can also look up “obscure saints,” “patron saints,” “patron saint of [fill in the blank],” “awesome saints,” etc.

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.

PARISH SEAL

Pastor's Signature _____

Name of Parish _____

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

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 deadline.

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. You 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 or 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 March 27.