

The Confirmation Preparation Process



Blessed Sacrament Church
Valley Stream, New York

Candidate _____

Catechist _____

Fall 2016-Spring 2017

Dear Confirmation Candidate,

Welcome to the formal process for preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation! You are here because you have demonstrated not only an understanding and knowledge of your faith, but also a commitment to Christ and his Church. In these next few years, you will continue to learn and explore that commitment. You will also be challenged to discern your spiritual gifts and integrate them into your lives as you grow into your own as a young man or woman of Christ.

Confirmation preparation, as dictated by our catechism, aims at “leading the Christian toward a more intimate union with Christ and a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit...in order to be more capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities of Christian life” (CCC #1309). Your participation in this process will put you in touch with those suited to aid you on this journey: the priests, catechists, and faithful parishioners of Blessed Sacrament.

Additionally, this packet is part of the whole process and adherence to its precepts as well as proper completion of its contents constitutes a minimum requirement for *quantitatively* moving forward in preparation. In addition to this packet, which contains general information about the preparation process as a whole, there are two supplementary *assignment packets* that will be due in December and April, respectively, that contain a project, service report, and six mass reflections each.

These exercises have been developed to further assist you in your Christian growth, so as to help ready you to receive the graces and gifts of Confirmation that more perfectly bond us to our faith and equip us to defend it and ourselves from evil.

On behalf of all the priests, staff, catechists, and parishioners of Blessed Sacrament, I wish you well on this journey and pledge our commitment to assist you in whatever ways we can.

God Bless,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Hochenberger".

Randell Hochenberger, M.Div.

Director of Faith Formation
Church of the Blessed Sacrament

Summary of Requirements within the Confirmation Process

- **Formal Study & Practice of the Catholic Faith**
 - This should present both the doctrinal and spiritual elements of faith formation and can be satisfied through enrollment in a Catholic school or in our parish Faith Formation.
 - In addition to the general emphasis on discipleship and Catholic doctrines, practices, and prayers, the Confirmation process will specially highlight the teachings on Catholic sexuality and morality as the modality of the Christian life.
- **Weekly Attendance at Sunday Mass and for Holy Days of Obligation**
 - The Holy Days of Obligation observed as such in the U.S. are as follows:
 - January 1: The Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God
 - Thursday of the 6th week of Easter: The Solemnity of the Ascension (this year: 5/25/17)
 - August 15: The Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
 - November 1: The Solemnity of All Saints (All Saints Day)
 - December 8: The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception
 - December 25: The Solemnity of the Nativity of our Lord, Jesus Christ (Christmas)
- **Participation in Ongoing Service with Reflections**
 - Service is less about hours served and more about desire to support a community. Young Christians should seek out ongoing service opportunities as a spiritual exercise to form in the individual a virtuous disposition.
 - Students are required 5 hours of parish service and 5 hours of community service *per year*.
 - Qualifying service opportunities are defined in this guide book, are to be faithfully undertaken and sufficiently reflected upon *in writing* twice a year by the candidate.
- **Regular Confession**
 - Regular Confession is encouraged, especially when conscious of grave sin. One can go any time of year, but most appropriately during Lent and Advent. It is suggested to approach the sacrament at least monthly, with the second Precept of the Church dictating that the Sacrament should be received at least once a year.
 - Youth in the Confirmation process are invited to all opportunities to do so, but are specifically encouraged to approach this sacrament in the way that is the norm for the parish: individual confession on Saturdays from 12-1pm.
- **Readiness Discussion (Final Year only)**
 - Candidates in the final stages of preparation will meet with active members of the parish community and discuss matters of faith as a final stepping stone in *qualitatively* determining one's readiness for the sacrament (*quantitative* determination consists in the satisfactory completion of all assignments and active participation in class).
- **Confirmation Retreat (Final Year only)**
 - For a deeper level of spiritual enrichment that goes beyond the scope of weekly catechetical sessions and explores more fully the role of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the faithful, candidates will attend a retreat lasting approximately 4 hours.
 - This retreat will also coincide with mass, during which the Confirmation candidates will present written *Statements of Intent* that will be utilized in the *Rite of Enrollment*, a special ceremony within the mass where the candidates will publicly declare their intentions to be confirmed.

Texts

Year I: Each first year Confirmation candidate will receive the textbook Faith Fusion (Published by Our Sunday Visitor). This particular resource is formatted based on our Catholic Catechism and will serve as a great tool for review as well as prepare youth for the materials they will be given in their second year.

All first-year Confirmation Prep youth will also receive a Bible to be used throughout his/her involvement in the Confirmation process and beyond. All materials, especially the Bible, which contains our sacred scripture, should be cared for meticulously and brought to every session.

Year II: Each second year Confirmation candidate will receive a copy of the YouCat, which is the officially promulgated Catholic Catechism for Youth by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI during his tenure as pope. It is a resource that formats Catholic teaching in an engaging and comprehensible way for young people.

The YouCat will be utilized alongside the bible (given out in the first year) and the YouCat Study Guide, which breaks down the content of the YouCat into weekly topics. Written homework from this guide will be assigned in addition to the Fall and Spring packets.

As a reminder, all materials, especially the Bible, which contains our Sacred Scripture, should be cared for meticulously and brought to every session whether or not it is actively used that week.

The textbooks are approved by the United States Bishops as well as our Diocese of Rockville Centre as texts that enrich three essential components of the preparation of the Sacrament of Confirmation. These components include Catechesis, Formation in the Life of the Community, and Discipleship/Service. In this preparation process the candidate will need to possess knowledge of the faith, demonstrate how to live as a disciple of Christ, and seek ongoing conversion of heart and mind through openness to the word of God and the exercise of virtue.

Confirmation Sponsor & Name

Though the Confirmation process takes place over the course of several years, two major components of the sacrament—the sponsor and name—should be considered and chosen as early as possible. These can always be changed, but the sooner a candidate chooses these, the sooner he or she can start involving the sponsor in the process as someone who will walk with the candidate *up to, during, and after* the sacrament is received, as well as explore the spiritual dimension of their chosen Confirmation name.

Notices will be mailed with information on the necessary paperwork needed and when it will be due. Please note that Late paperwork will automatically result in delaying the reception of Confirmation for another year. No exceptions. Some of this paperwork includes sacrament documents for sponsors to verify their eligibility. *Families who anticipate difficulty in obtaining these documents should plan accordingly and notify the Director of Faith Formation as soon as possible for assistance.*

Sponsor: The mentoring role of sponsor is of paramount importance and the ability of the sponsor to do so is the primary criteria. As a result, *at minimum*, the sponsor should be a fully initiated Catholic who supports the parents and youth with example and instruction. The sponsor must be at least 16 years old, baptized and confirmed, living an upright life without impediment (e.g. has not left the faith or was married by a priest in a [Catholic] Church), and cannot be either parent of the candidate. Sponsors will need to present copies of their baptismal and confirmation certificates (available from the parishes in which those sacraments were received) as well as a copy of a Catholic marriage certificate, if married.

In addition, all sponsors will need to obtain an “eligibility certificate” from their home parishes that verifies the above. The process for sponsors who are parishioners at Blessed Sacrament is to fill out a “sponsor checklist” form and submit that with the requisite sacrament documents in order to receive their certificate. Given the requirements, *it is strongly recommended that the sponsor live relatively close to the candidate and is someone who has regular involvement in his/her life.* Please contact the parish if there are any questions or concerns about a potential sponsor.

Confirmation Name: Many people decide to choose a Confirmation name, *but this is not required.* Rather than choosing a new name, candidates may use their baptismal name, reaffirming it at Confirmation and signifying the inherent connection between Baptism and Confirmation. If a candidate does choose a [new] name for Confirmation, it must not be offensive to Christian sensibility (i.e. Lucifer) and is usually that of a saint or other important religious/biblical figure, but can also be that of any faith-filled (Christian) individual whom she admires, famous or not, living or deceased.

Mass & Mass Reflections

As Catholic Christians, we come together as a community to hear the Word of God and partake in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the Eucharist that is the Body and Blood of Christ. This is the ultimate prayer of the Church and essential to a life of faith.

In its Sunday celebration, going to mass satisfies the First Precept of the Church (to attend mass on Sundays and Holy Days) and helps us to fulfill the Third Commandment (to keep holy the Lord's Day). Attending mass in this context is both an obligation and a privilege for *all* Catholics. Thus, such participation on the part of Confirmation candidates and their families is expected and contributes toward *both quantitative and qualitative* satisfaction of the Confirmation Prep requirements.

The benefits of mass attendance are many and the graces more apparent as we participate more frequently and actively. However, these benefits and graces are limited if our consideration of the liturgy ends with the mass; in order to truly and faithfully fulfill our Christian duty, we must continue to reflect on the readings and mysteries contained in the mass throughout the week, doing our best to integrate them into our daily lives.

For this reason, candidates will submit six mass reflections with each supplement packet (fall and spring). *Families are duly reminded of the obligation to attend mass weekly, despite mass reflections not being required for every week.* These mass reflections are aimed at helping Confirmation candidates critically think about and reflect on the Mass in order to help in that integration process. In this way, the candidates may be better disposed to receive Confirmation.

Below is a sample of a mass reflection. Please note the difference between the summary of the readings (first short answer) and the reflection (second short answer). Also note the amount of space given for the answers. You should not need more than what is allotted, but you should be able to use the full amount in your responses. If you find it difficult to answer the questions sufficiently, consult your family, catechists, priests, etc. This ought to be your unique work, but you do not have to do it alone.

<u>Mass Reflections ~ Confirmation Prep</u>	
Name <u>John Smith</u>	Date (of Mass) <u>June 29, 2014</u>
Catechist <u>Mrs. Doe</u>	Time of Mass <u>11:00am</u>
Celebrant (Priest) <u>Fr. Peter</u>	Church: <u>Blessed Sacrament</u>
Color of Priest's Vestments <u>Red</u>	Church Season: <u>Ordinary Time</u>
Gospel <u>Matthew 16:13-19</u>	Feast (if any): <u>Solemnity of Saints</u>
Summarize the events of the Gospel (or other readings) today.	<u>Peter, Paul, Apostles</u>
<u>In the Gospel, Peter recognizes that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Because of this, Jesus tells Peter that he will lead the church as its "rock." Jesus gives Peter the "keys" to Heaven so that he and the other disciples can lead with the same authority that Jesus leads with.</u>	
Reflection: what did you learn from the reading described above or the priest's homily and how does it apply (or can you make it apply) to your life?	
<u>I learned that even though Peter was not perfect, his faith allowed him to recognize who Jesus really was. Even though I am not perfect, Jesus has called me to him as he did with Peter and challenges me to have the same faith so that I can effectively serve God and trust the authority Christ vested in the Church and her leaders.</u>	

Community Service

One of our fundamental duties as Catholics is to care for others and our environment. When God created the first humans, Adam and Eve, he made them stewards of the land. Further, embedded in his Divine Law as revealed in Sacred Scripture is respect, care, and compassion for others. Commandments 4-10 are primarily concerned with that responsibility, as was Jesus when he gave us the Great Commandment to love God and love our neighbor. It is also a fundamental piece of our Catholic Tradition, especially as outlined in core principles such as the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy and Catholic Social Teaching. It is also the focus of the encyclical of Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* (*On Care for Our Common Home*).

While our primary mission as disciples of Christ is evangelization (i.e. spreading the Gospel) and following Christ eagerly in our own lives, a large part of our Catholic identity involves serving others in the same way that Jesus ministered to people while still always focused on his mission of salvation. Thus, participation in *ongoing* service is part of who we are as Catholics and, as such, a necessary part of the process of preparing for Confirmation.

What is most important, however, is that this ongoing service—be it accomplished through continued participation in various forms of service or an ongoing process as in being part of a volunteer group or recurring volunteer activity (see below of acceptable options)—be done for its own sake. The ultimate goal to be considered when serving is the good that is being accomplished as well as the internal discipline for virtue that is typically formed as a result of habitual good works.

Since this is a *quantitative and qualitative* part of the preparation process, there are some limits to the types of service that apply and there will be a ***minimum of 10 hours per year (five in service to the parish, and five in service to the broader community)***.

Twice a year candidates will submit a reflection of their service work—once in each supplement packet. It should reflect on the overall experience of service, what was learned (specifically including how it applies one or more of the Works of Mercy or themes of Catholic Social Teaching), and the types of future service the candidate would be interested in and why.

Below are *some* examples of acceptable forms of service. Youth are encouraged to be creative and find opportunities that suit them, so if there is a type of service not listed a candidate would like to engage in, notify the Director of Faith Formation in advance for approval. In the calendar for the year, service opportunities are listed in orange.

Suggestions for acceptable forms of service:

- Altar serving accompanied (on days not serving) by greeting at the doors, assisting the elderly to their pews, handing out bulletins, and clearing pews of any debris after mass.
- Volunteering as an aid during the Saturday Faith Formation sessions and helping with the Children's dismissal on Sundays, if available (if not, then greeting and ushering as mentioned above at the mass attended by the candidate/family).
- Helping out in Parish Outreach. For information contact Judy Miccio at 516-561-8969
- Assisting in various parish fundraisers, campaigns, events, hospitality functions, etc.
- Volunteering with non-parish organizations such as St. Vincent de Paul, Catholic Charities, Blood Drives, schools, hospitals, cancer/disease fundraising events, etc.
- Active participation in a service-oriented group (e.g. Girl/Boy Scouts, Fire Dept. Juniors, Knights of Columbus Squire/Squirettes) or starting one's own charity/service group.
- Regularly helping in one's own neighborhood (e.g. doing chores for an elderly neighbor).