

Parent & Candidate Introductory Meeting

Objective

At the end of this meeting, Confirmation candidates and their parents will understand the basics of the sacrament Confirmation, the role of the sponsor, and the “housekeeping” details of how Confirmation preparation is handled at the parish.

Audience

All Confirmation candidates and their parents should attend this meeting.

Topics that should be covered

- Basic review of what the Sacrament of Confirmation is
- The role of the parent
- Explanation of choosing a Confirmation name
- The role of the Confirmation sponsor
- Housekeeping specific to each parish:
 - Dates of Confirmation Sessions
 - Date of Confirmation
 - Dates of any other sponsor or parent meetings
 - Any other information...
- Clear message that Confirmation *is not the end* – explain what the parish offers next year for those who have been Confirmed

Confirmation Session #1 – Retreat Experience

The following information on retreats can also be found in the 2019-2020 Confirmation Guidelines:

Diocesan Retreats

It is important that parishes provide a retreat experience for their Confirmation candidates. The diocese will offer several Confirmation retreats through the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry. Information on these retreats will be posted on our website and sent out through the monthly PCL Newsletter.

Other Retreat Experiences

If it is not possible to attend a diocesan retreat, a parish may offer another retreat experience. A retreat experience can be an overnight retreat, a one-day retreat, or another experience that the PCL deems appropriate. Whatever the format, we suggest that all Confirmation retreat experiences should include the following elements:

- A notably *different* environment than the normal religious education sessions.
- Experience of prayer, preferably outside of their normal experience (Lectio Divina, Eucharistic Adoration, the Rosary, Praise and Worship, etc.)
- Opportunity for the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- Opportunity to reflect on God’s work in a candidate’s life
- Opportunity to reflect on candidate’s plan to respond to God’s call

One good (and ready-made!) resource for a retreat is the “Chosen Confirmation Retreat” offered by Ascension Press. They offer a weekend model and a one-day retreat model.¹

¹ Available for free at http://confirmationstudy.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Retreat_Chosen_download.pdf
This retreat works well even if you haven’t used the *Chosen* program with your students

Confirmation Session #2 – The Sacrament of Confirmation

Objective

At the end of this session, candidates will understand how Confirmation fits in with the other Sacraments of Initiation. Candidates will also understand the rite of Confirmation and its basic symbols, as well as be familiar with the effects of Confirmation.

Connection to Confirmation

This is the session that most fully explains Confirmation, which candidates are preparing for. Future sessions will continually look ahead and connect to Confirmation, but all the basic elements of the sacrament should be covered here.

Essential Topics

- The Sacraments of Initiation (CCC 1212)
- How Confirmation interacts with other the Sacraments of Initiation (CCC 1285, 1316, 1321)
- Instruction on the Rite of Confirmation and its basic symbols (CCC 1293-1301)
 - The imposition of hands
 - The anointing with Sacred Chrism
 - The words of the sacramental formula
- Explain effects of the Sacrament of Confirmation (CCC 1302-1305)
- The Bishop is the ordinary minister of the Sacrament of Confirmation (CCC 1313)

Other notes/suggestions

- This is a good lesson to get a sense of the students' understanding of the Sacrament of Confirmation. You could begin class by asking – “What do you know about Confirmation?” This allows you to get some discussion going and give you an idea of what gaps exist and what needs to be corrected.
- Another possibility is to demonstrate Confirmation by ‘acting out’ the rite of Confirmation. Doing so engages the candidates’ senses and can give them a better feel for what is physically going to be happening when they are Confirmed.

Confirmation Session #3 – Our Desire for God & Salvation History

Objective

At the end of this session, candidates will understand the natural and unquenchable desire for God in the human heart and how God communicates himself to us throughout salvation history. Each candidate should understand the “big picture” of Salvation History, from Creation right up to their lives today.

Connection to Confirmation

As we come to recognize our own hunger and thirst for God, we see that Confirmation helps us along that journey because it “unites us more firmly to Christ,” “increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit,” and “renders our bond with the Church more perfect” (CCC 1303). In other words, now that we can understand why we desire God and how he makes himself known to us in history, we can also see how Confirmation is a gift that draws us even nearer to God.

Essential Topics

- Our Desire for God (CCC 27-30)
- Ways of Coming to Know God (CCC 31-35)
- Revelation (CCC 50-53, 68, 69)
- Salvation History (CCC 54-67, 69-73)
 - Creation
 - Fall
 - Promise of Redemption
 - Covenant
 - Incarnation
 - Redemption
 - The Church

Other notes/suggestions

- In discussing our desire for God, you can talk about how *nothing* on earth, even very good things, gives us perfect and lasting satisfaction. Coming up with different examples, and how they fall short, can be a good interactive activity. This unquenchable desire for satisfaction helps to demonstrate that we are built for something *beyond* this earthly life.
- In explaining our desire for God and how we can come to know God, it is worth discussing the point that belief in God is not opposed to our reason (CCC 35).
- For the “salvation history” section, you can use a timeline to show the major events in salvation history. This is a good opportunity for students to get involved. For example, you could have students make their own timelines or have the class work together to guess/understand the events as they make one big timeline.

Confirmation Session #4 – The Holy Spirit

Objective

At the end of this session, candidates will have a greater understanding of the third person of the Trinity. Students should also be able to recognize the Holy Spirit in their lives and know how to pray to the Holy Spirit.

Connection to Confirmation

“It is evident from its celebration that the effect of the sacrament of Confirmation is the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost” (CCC 1302). Moreover, Confirmation “increase the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us” (CCC 1303) This session, then, will better prepare students for this special encounter with the Holy Spirit.

Essential Topics

- The Holy Spirit as third person of the Trinity (CCC 683-686, 743)
- The Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit (CCC1831)
- The Fruits of the Holy Spirit (CCC 1832)
- The Holy Spirit’s Role in Confirmation (CCC 1302-1303)
- Prayer and the Holy Spirit (CCC 741, 2652, 2661, 2670-2672)

Other notes/suggestions

- The Holy Spirit is often the most neglected of the three persons in the Trinity. This class provides a good opportunity for students to “get to know” the Holy Spirit, both in understanding some basics about Him, but also in understanding how to pray with and to the Holy Spirit.

Confirmation Session #5 – Jesus Christ

Objective

At the end of this session, candidates will know who Jesus Christ is, be familiar with his life, and understand the invitation to have a personal relationship with Him.

Connection to Confirmation

Confirmation “unites us more firmly to Christ” (CCC1303) and candidates are expected to “be prepared to assume the role of disciples and witness to Christ” (CCC1319). This session, which re-introduces candidates to Jesus and his life, will serve as a foundation for the next session (Mission as Disciples).

Essential Topics

*This is a big topic. In creating your lesson, consider your particular group of students to decide which elements of Jesus’ life would be most useful to study. Many of these topics will have already been covered in session #2.

- Who is Jesus (Matthew 16:15, CCC 452-455)
- Why did Jesus come to earth? (CCC 456-460)
- The Incarnation (CCC 461-469, 479-480)
- Jesus’ Life (CCC 512, 516-518)
- The Mysteries of Jesus’ hidden life (CCC 531-534)
- The Mysteries of Jesus’ public life (CCC 535-560)
- The Trial of Jesus (CCC 595-596)
- The Crucifixion of Jesus (CCC 619-623)
- The Resurrection of Jesus (CCC 639-640, 655)
- The Ascension of Jesus (CCC 659-667)

Other notes/suggestions

- A useful discussion in the question of “Who Jesus Is” is the “Liar, Lunatic, Lord” argument. The argument essentially says Jesus can only be one of three things: someone who is lying about who he is, someone who is crazy, or truly who he claims to be. The popular notion that Jesus is a good person or simply a moral teacher doesn’t hold up, and this argument is helpful in demonstrating that point.

Confirmation Session #6 – Mission as Disciples

Objective

At the end of this session, candidates will more deeply understand what it means to be Catholic and to live as a disciple of Christ. If students haven't already finished their discipleship plan, they will do so in this session or the next. These themes will be continued in the next session.

Connection to Confirmation

A major part of Confirmation preparation is attempting to “awaken a sense of belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ, the universal Church as well as the parish community” (CCC 1309) and candidates must “be prepared to assume the role of disciple and witness to Christ” (CCC 1319). This session, as well as the next one, will make the ideas of discipleship and life in the parish practical and possible for candidates.

Essential Topics

- The Precepts of the Church (CCC 2041-2043)
- Moral Life and Missionary Witness (CCC 2044-2046)
- Mission—A requirement of the Church's catholicity (CCC 849-856)
- The apostolate (CCC 863-865)
- Universal Call to Holiness (CCC 2013, 2028-2029)

Other notes/suggestions

- As a reminder, students should have completed, or perhaps just began their discipleship plans. Some parishes will implement discipleship plans at the beginning of the year. Otherwise, the discipleship plans for students should be introduced during this lesson, in the hopes of completing it as soon as possible in preparation for Confirmation and their faith walk thereafter.
- It would be appropriate in this session for the catechist, or another suitable parishioner, to give a witness to how *they* live a life of discipleship. Or even better, how they may have lived a life of discipleship when they were the same age as candidates for Confirmation. Any witness given should be age-appropriate and applicable to the lives of these candidates.

Confirmation Session #7 – The Challenge of Following Christ

Objective

At the end of this session, candidates will understand why living as a disciple is challenging but also why it is ultimately worth it. The candidate's discipleship plans should be submitted before or during this session.

Connection to Confirmation

As we have stated before, candidates preparing for Confirmation must "be prepared to assume the role of disciple and witness to Christ" (CCC 1319). This session will focus on the reality of discipleship, the good and the bad, as candidates prepare to receive Confirmation and ultimately continue their journey as followers of Christ.

Essential Topics

- Our Participation in Christ's Sacrifice (CCC 618)
- Becoming fellow workers in God's kingdom by our actions, prayers and sufferings (CCC 307)
- Taking up One's Cross (Matthew 10:34-39, Mark 8:34-38, Luke 9:23-27)
- The Cost of Discipleship (Luke 14:25-33, CCC 2544)
- The Cross and Self-Denial (Matthew 16:24-28, Romans 8:17, Colossians 1:24)
- Heaven (CCC 1023-1029)

Other notes/suggestions

- In addition to the Scripture and Catechism references above, be sure to include some real-world examples of how these young people might be called to suffer for the faith. How might they be embarrassed or set apart for believing in Jesus Christ? Are there any appropriate examples that you or another adult could share where you have experienced the cross of discipleship? As always, examples should be age-appropriate.
- Being a disciple isn't easy, but that doesn't mean you have to leave this session on a note of doom and gloom! Being a disciple of Jesus ultimately means sharing eternal life with him in heaven. "Heaven is the ultimate end and fulfillment of the deepest human longings, the state of supreme, definitive happiness" (CCC 1024). Make sure that candidates are aware that they are called to this supreme and definitive happiness.

Confirmation Session #8 – Celebration & Looking Ahead

(to take place *after* candidates have received Confirmation)

Objective

At the end of this session, candidates should understand how your parish plans to continue supporting their spiritual journey. They should be encouraged to continue being involved in the parish and growing in their relationship with God.

Connection to Confirmation

The candidates are no longer candidates – they have received the sacrament of Confirmation! This session will demonstrate that their spiritual life and life in the parish does not end, but rather continues to grow after Confirmation.

Possible Ideas

- Celebrate! Have a reception to celebrate their Confirmation and to encourage them to consider their next steps.
- Have a church ministry fair:
 - Leaders from different ministries at the church (lectors, eucharistic ministers, ushers, greeters, service outreach, maintenance, Knights of Columbus, etc.) talk about their ministries and invite these newly-confirmed members of the church to be involved.
- Have a group discussion. Ask the group:
 - What was your experience at Confirmation?
 - Did anything surprise you?
 - What are your plans moving forward?
 - What one thing that we covered this year stuck with you?
 - What was it like having a sponsor?
- Plan, *with* your students, the following year
 - Provide some options of youth group ideas or study programs
 - Ask where their interests are and what they'd like to do
 - Be open to their ideas!