

CONFIRMATION PREPARATION

How do we make sure that Confirmation is not viewed as graduation from faith formation? First, we stop assuming young people will want to leave the parish.

If we have made a concerted effort to help young people feel at home, be involved, and understand that they are valued members of the community, chances are they will stay. If we call them by name, include them, and listen to them, chances are they will know we will miss them if they fail to show up for a time.

Confirmation is a time of great hope. It is recognition of the wonderful gifts already present in our young people. Like learning to drive a car, it is one of the many “happenings” in the lives of young people. As they learn to drive, the rest of their life does not cease to exist; instead, learning to drive is just one more thing on their list. Confirmation, while a special occasion, must be treated as another opportunity to grow in faith. If, however, we treat it as a last ditch effort to teach everything. If we make the preparation too long and the requirements too arduous, young people will not see it as one thing among many; they will see it as we have made it: a chore to survive.

Parishes would be well served by reimagining Confirmation prep so that it is an opportunity to *continue* a journey in the parish community, which began at baptism.

The Role of the Confirmation Sponsor

The role of the Confirmation Sponsor involves much more than simply standing behind the Candidate as the bishop confirms. It is the beginning, or the continuation, or a lasting relationship of mentoring and guidance.

The prayers and support of the Sponsor are an important part of preparation for Confirmation, and helps the Confirmation Candidate live his or her baptismal promises both before and after Confirmation.

“Teens with parents who attend religious services more often and for whom faith is more important are more likely than teens whose parents attend less often and for whom faith is less important to be religiously devoted. (Christian Smith, *Soul Searching*, pg 111) In short, we get what we are.”

Indicators for Effective Confirmation Preparation

(National Directory for Catechesis (NDC), 36.A.2)

- ☐ We strive to awaken a sense of belonging to the parish community and the universal Church in those being confirmed.
- ☐ We offer opportunities for parents, families and sponsors to be involved in the sacramental preparation process with the confirmandi.
- ☐ We offer service learning opportunities where confirmandi learn that service is an attitude and a lifestyle rather than a task to complete.
- ☐ We provide opportunities that nurture a deeper sense of spirituality with the confirmandi, such as retreats.
- ☐ We incorporate sacramental preparation into the larger vision of ministry to young people.
- ☐ We help the confirmandi understand the meaning and significance of their choice to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- ☐ We help the confirmandi understand their giftedness and how they can serve the larger Church community.
- ☐ We help our confirmandi understand the importance of attending Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation.
- ☐ We help our confirmandi understand the importance of regular reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- ☐ We help our confirmandi understand that Confirmation more perfectly binds the baptized to the Church and enriches each person with the gifts of the Holy Spirit so that the individual can be a true witness to Christ.
- ☐ We introduce confirmandi to the role of the Holy Spirit in their lives.
- ☐ We help our confirmandi understand that through Confirmation they are fully initiated but not completely formed (provided that they have received Holy Communion).

Recommendations for Effective Confirmation Preparation

Incorporate Confirmation Preparation into a comprehensive ministry to young people

- ☐ Encourage them to participate in parish youth ministry events
- ☐ Provide opportunities to support their parish
- ☐ Provide year-round events: summer activities as well as school year
- ☐ Family service projects
- ☐ Build relationships between adult volunteers and youth
- ☐ Continually invite them to be involved
- ☐ Have young people who are already confirmed serve as mentors for current confirmation candidates

Provide opportunities for the candidates to serve in the mission and ministries of the Church

- ☐ Have candidates take on faith formation projects for younger children
- ☐ Have representatives from different ministries come speak to the candidates about being involved in the parish
- ☐ Have candidates participate in liturgical roles and designated Masses
- ☐ Have other parishioners pray for and write affirmation letters to candidates

Provide opportunities for parents, families and sponsors to be engaged in the preparation process

- ☐ Provide resources to start conversations between candidates and their parents and/or sponsors
- ☐ Provide a parent orientation packet or meeting
- ☐ Have parents participate in some preparation sessions
- ☐ Provide opportunities for parents to connect with other parents
- ☐ Provide parent packets for retreats with resources such as praying for your child or how to talk to them after the retreat experience

Provide formation outside of gathered classroom time

- ☐ Formation is more than information. Find creative and unique ways to form young people during the preparation process
- ☐ Provide service learning opportunities where candidates serve together and reflect upon what they have done
- ☐ Provide opportunities for candidates to pray together such as Eucharist Adoration nights
- ☐ Encourage candidates to participate in diocesan or national events
- ☐ Require candidates to participate in retreat experiences

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS AND FAITH FORMATION

The parish community is the sacramental home for the faithful. It is surrounded by this community of believers where infants are baptized, young children receive their first Reconciliation and First Holy Communion, and where adolescents are Confirmed in their faith. A parish community is a place where families are invited to celebrate Sunday Mass together and it should be a place where young people are known and welcomed.

In addition to the primary community that is formed by a parish, there are other communities of faith that can be instrumental in the ongoing faith formation of our people. Such communities are formed in each of our Catholic schools. A strong Catholic school can (and should) provide the environment where faith is nurtured. A Catholic school should be a place of authentic witness to the power and presence of God in the lives of its students and faculty. A Catholic school, like a parish faith formation program, offers a safe space where young people can ask difficult questions and trust that the adults will answer honestly and, when the answer is unknown, will help the young person seek the Truth.

Still, it is essential that the leaders of the Catholic school community do all they can to connect young people back to the parish community, where the journey of faith began and where it will continue long after the students depart the caring environment the school provides.

