



Adolescent Confirmation Preparation During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Creative Approaches to Preparing Your Candidates

The adolescent [Confirmation Policy](#) of the Archdiocese of Chicago is designed to help guide children and adolescents on their sacramental journey, united with the vibrancy of community, and continue to give new life as they seek this sacred path. The challenges of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic call us to exercise creativity and flexibility in following this policy, but also renewed zeal in drawing young people closer to Jesus, His Church and His mission.

This document focuses on creative approaches to the three particular laws with the Policy that can prove most challenging during this time of limited in-person gathering and general physical distancing. Each of these laws remain important and may even increase in urgency as young people in their family face isolation, anxiety and potential hopelessness during the pandemic.

- § 1900.3 Community Responsibility
- § 1900.4 Missionary Service
- § 1900.5 Annual Retreat

It is important to note that while the Archdiocese of Chicago, through the Archdiocesan Confirmation Policy, expresses the requirements of sacramental preparation, each parish may determine how and in what way the requirements are implemented. The alternative approaches provided below are suggestions to help each parish in their individual planning of sacramental preparation and are not required by the archdiocese.

Community Responsibility

Policy 1900.3 Particular Law — To the fullest extent possible the parish community consisting of clergy, parents, sponsors, family members, catechetical leaders, catechists and parishioners shall actively participate in the sacramental preparation.

While your parish community may not be able to gather in person to participate in the sacramental preparation, consider some of these alternate solutions to keep the whole parish community a part of the confirmation preparation process:

- **Host a Parent Virtual Panel.** Gather parents of both this year and last year's confirmandi to talk as peers about the preparation process. A few parents who participated in the preparation process the year prior could form a panel and answer questions from current parents in a discussion moderated by the catechetical leader. The catechetical leader would poll parents prior to the panel to gather these questions and give panelists time to form their responses. This virtual panel could also be done with sponsors.
- **Hold a Sponsor Discussion Session.** Provide an opportunity for sponsors to gather and brainstorm creative ways that they can best support their candidate. This would also be a good opportunity to share relevant resources with sponsors. This could also be done with parents.
- **Keep Confirmandi in Parish Prayers.** Offer a reoccurring prayer intention at Mass for the confirmandi as they prepare for confirmation. You might also encourage existing prayer groups in the parish to devote time to specifically praying for those youth who are preparing for their confirmation. You can also share the names of those preparing for



confirmation with the parish community and ask individuals to keep confirmandi in their prayers.

Missionary Service

Policy 1900.4 Particular Law — Confirmation preparation shall include service initiatives that foster missionary discipleship through the integration of community outreach and evangelization.

While traditional acts of missionary service may be unsuited for our current physical distancing, there are still unique opportunities to invite confirmandi to enter into missionary discipleship where they are encountering God in their neighbors. Young people should be encouraged to discern how Jesus calls them to serve during this unique moment in our world.

- **Emphasize Acts of Service Instead of Service Hours.** Reflect with confirmandi on the meaning and importance of missionary discipleship and encourage them to brainstorm how they might reach out and serve others as Jesus did in our current situation. Decide on a specific number of acts of service that each confirmandi should complete during their preparation process. You can either work together to identify a list of service acts that your teens can choose from or leave the options open and encourage your confirmandi to each identify the needs of their neighbors. Help candidates record and reflect on their acts of service, consider having them complete a virtual log. This log could take many different forms (such as taking a selfie and writing a reflection for each act of service), but it is important to provide the confirmandi with some structure for reflection and reporting.
- **Partner with Other Parish Ministries.** Whether it be the youth ministry or an adult group in the parish, you can partner with other parish ministries to support their efforts to serving others. Ask what neighbors in need they are serving and design acts of service that welcome confirmandi to be a part of the process. This option can also provide a clear avenue for the confirmandi to stay involved in the parish once they become an adult member of the Church.
- **Use Ideas from the Community to Create Acts of Service.** The larger community has already begun to brainstorm ways that youth can help their neighbors as they move through the pandemic. While all of their ideas may not work for your confirmandi, you can use their ideas as a place to jump start your list.
 - [Youth Service America](#) has created a list of ways youth can help their community during the pandemic. They also provide resources on investigating, planning, taking action, reflecting and celebrating to accompany each act of service.
 - [Project Giving Kids](#) has created a search tool where teens can find service opportunities specifically tailored toward youth.
 - Look at [Catholic Charities](#) volunteer opportunities and discern if they could be a part of your acts of service.
 - In addition, gather ideas from other sources, such as [this list of physically distant service ideas](#), to build your parish's own acts of service list.

Annual Retreat

Policy 1900.5 Particular Law — Confirmation preparation shall include designated time reserved for prayer, reflection and discernment which may be in the form of an annual retreat.

While you may not be able to hold an in-person retreat day for all your confirmandi to attend together, there are still ways to incorporate time for prayer, reflection and discernment in a meaningful way.



- **Use Your Once a Month In-person Gathering to Hold a Retreat.** The structure of an in-person retreat will have to be adapted to adhere to safety guidelines, but it is still possible to have your retreat in-person. Include elements that lend themselves to keeping teens physically distanced, such as icebreakers that can be done while keeping physically separated (such as [Take a Stand](#)), and individual prayer, reflection, journaling, and discernment time.
- **Use the Virtual Confirmation Retreat That Will be Provided by the Archdiocese.** In lieu of Holy Fire, the Archdiocese of Chicago is putting together a free virtual confirmation retreat. The archdiocese will provide both content and a leader guide for parishes to facilitate a confirmation retreat at their own pace and time. This retreat will consist entirely of content that is able to be used virtually, with some elements that could be adapted to in-person, depending on parish's specific situation. The retreat will be available in January of 2021. More details to come.
- **Hold a Virtual or At-home Retreat.** If you cannot meet with your youth in person, then you can put together a retreat that can be done virtually or at home. For virtual retreats, you can either have everyone log in and participate in the retreat together or you can create a retreat that the students can do in their own time. The first lends itself to more discussion, while the second is better structured for more reflection. Another option is to create a retreat that students can do on their own at home, without the need to be plugged in. Have students go through the same elements as each other (praying same prayer, reflecting on the same questions, etc.) but allow them to move through the retreat with as little need for technology as possible.
- **Build a Retreat Experience.** Regardless of the type of retreat you provide for your confirmandi, when creating your own retreat, make sure to include essential elements. Start with a theme to link all your retreat elements together. Make sure that there is time devoted to prayer. Compile elements such as readings, videos, witness talks, prayer activities, etc. and create reflection questions to help candidates process the content. In the end, invite teens into discernment with very specific directives that allow them to react to the content of the retreat.
- **Use Your Confirmation Curriculum and Other Resources to Plan Your Retreat.** Whether you are doing in person, virtual, or at-home retreat the following free resources can be used in planning your retreat.
 - Check your confirmation curriculum to see what they are offering to assist in creating a retreat.
 - [Retreat Themes](#) from NET Ministries
 - [At-home Confirmation Retreat](#) from the Diocese of Kalamazoo
 - [Video Catechism Prayer](#) videos from the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston
 - [Video on Confirmation](#) that explains and illustrates the sacramental theology from Sofia Institute Sketchpad
 - [Stories of Encounter](#) videos from ODB Restored about how Christ's love moved them to action

Please make use of the resources and recommendations throughout this document, as well as any other sources that will help you in creating, implementing and sustaining your confirmation preparation program. Remember that while there are requirements that there be communal participation, missionary service and a retreat experience as part of the preparation, the specifics of how and in what way these required elements are implemented is and has been up to each

individual parish. As always, please feel free to reach out to your Lifelong Formation Coordinator (contact information found [here](#)) for any support that you need during this time.