



ADOLESCENT CONFIRMATION PREPARATION

Resources and Suggestions for a Two-Year Program



The **Confirmation Policy** of the Archdiocese of Chicago states that the length of parish sacramental preparation for the sacrament of confirmation shall be a minimum of two years for adolescent candidates (excluding RCIA) (§ 1900.2 Program Uniformity). This document is meant to guide parishes in transitioning from a one-year program to a two-year program. Below you will find:

- Suggested goals for youth, parents, sponsors and parish leaders to support the candidates as they prepare for the sacrament of confirmation
- Possible themes/focus areas for each year
- Practical considerations to foster a deeper relationship for candidates as they continue to encounter Christ in their daily lives
- Additional Program resources

Parish leaders, pastors and directors/coordinators of religious education are encouraged to make the sacrament of confirmation accessible for families through conversation, education and pastoral accompaniment.

STEP ONE

SET CLEAR GOALS

A successful confirmation program will have clear goals not only for the confirmandi (§ 1900.1 Confirmation Readiness), but also for their parents/guardians, sponsors and the parish leaders (§ 1900.3 Community Responsibility). These goals should be clearly communicated, and the program should plan to meet each goal.

Suggested Goals for Youth

- Commit to preparation for the sacrament through attendance at faith formation classes.
- Develop a more intentional relationship with God through Jesus.
- Learn more about what it means to be a follower of Jesus as a missionary disciple.
- Experience opportunities to practice faith through prayer, belonging and dialogue in community and missionary outreach.

Suggested Goals for Parents and Guardians

- Commit to preparation for the sacrament for their child.
- Develop a more intentional relationship with Jesus to better walk with their child.
- Participate in community building and missionary service opportunities with their child at the parish and within the community.
- Commit to faith sharing conversations with their child.
- Strengthen their family relationships so all may grow in relationship with God.
- Understand the expectations for the two-year confirmation process.

Suggested Goals for Sponsors

- Understand their role as sponsor which is to accompany and participate in the candidate's spiritual life.
- Continue growing closer to Jesus as they accompany their candidate.
- Commit to preparing their candidate for the sacrament through faith-sharing conversations.
- Support the parents of the candidate in preparation for the sacrament.

Suggested Goals for the Parish Leaders

- Intentionally invite and welcome all Catholic young people and their parents into the sacramental journey toward confirmation.
- Communicate program details and expectations to candidates, parents and sponsors early and often throughout the preparation program.
- Undertake an accompanying and evangelizing spirit to provide support to candidates, parents, sponsors and families who are preparing for the sacrament.
- Increase the parish's awareness of where the candidates and their sponsors are in the confirmation journey through pulpit announcements, bulletin articles, displays in the gathering spaces and requests for prayer.

STEP TWO

SET A THEME OR FOCUS AREA FOR EACH YEAR

A two-year confirmation program creates more space to explore and engage with topics and activities that help young people grow in faith and take ownership of their journeys as missionary disciples. Setting a clear theme for each year of the program allows for a more intentional faith journey. Here are suggested themes/focus areas for each year.

Year One: Invitation into Discipleship and Community

The first year of confirmation preparation centers on getting to know the person of Jesus Christ in a deeper way and developing a closer relationship with God through prayer, fellowship and dialogue among peers, contemplation of Scripture and participation in the liturgical life of the Church. This first year should include a retreat (§ 1900.5 Annual Retreat), an opportunity to express the candidate's commitment to preparing for the sacrament of confirmation and learning more about what it means to follow Jesus as His disciple through the witness of others and service to the family, parish, broader community and world (§ 1900.4 Missionary Service).

Year Two: Discernment and Commissioning

The second year of confirmation preparation focuses on growing as a disciple of Jesus Christ by directed study about the sacrament of confirmation, living a life of encounter and service modeled on the life of Jesus (§ 1900.4 Missionary Service), and taking inspiration and learning from witnesses. This second year should include a retreat (§ 1900.5 Annual Retreat), formation experiences with sponsors and parents/guardians (§ 1900.3 Community Responsibility) and an opportunity to express the candidate's readiness and desire for reception of the sacrament of confirmation (§ 1900.1 Confirmation Readiness). Sound formation in the sacrament is key during this second year to ensure the candidate's understanding of the ritual of confirmation and the action of the Holy Spirit in their life. The time after the reception of the sacrament should be reserved for mystagogical experiences which enable the newly confirmed to develop a deeper sense of the faith, the Church and the world.

STEP THREE

FORMAT PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR EACH YEAR

With these themes/focus areas in mind, the 2-year preparation process flow can be generally laid out to encompass all relevant topics and move seamlessly from one category to another. The order of the categories is meant to accompany young disciples in a way that helps to build their relationship with Jesus. In addition, though they are not topics, retreats (§ 1900.5 Annual Retreat) are included to show where they could fit and to stress the importance of including them in your confirmation preparation process. Holy Fire, while not listed a topic under a specific year, is also encouraged to be a part of your confirmation preparation process.

Year One

1. Invitation and Welcome
 - a. Topics: Orientation Session, Community Building
2. Embracing the Call of Jesus
 - a. Topics: Prayer, Faith-sharing: Peer to Peer, Missionary Outreach and Service/Social Justice
 - b. First Year Retreat
3. Catechetical Moments (Part one)
 - a. Topics: Scripture and Tradition, Creed, Liturgy and the Liturgical Year
4. Sacramental Preparation (Part one)
 - a. Topics: Discernment of Saints and Sponsors, Commitment to the Journey

Year Two

1. Catechetical Moments (Part two)
 - a. Topics: Pentecost, Sacraments of Initiation, Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit
2. Sacramental Preparation (Part two)
 - a. Topics: Commitment to the Journey, Reconciliation, Morality
3. Becoming a Disciple of Jesus
 - a. Topics: Missionary Outreach, Service/Social Justice, Involvement in Parish Community, Faith-sharing: Candidate and Sponsor/Parent, Prayer
 - b. Second Year Retreat
4. Mystagogy
 - a. Topics: Reflection on the Confirmation Experience, Going Forward

Once the general format and flow for the preparation process has been created, each parish can discern the ways in which to cover all topics, depending on what is best suited for the individual parish. The following table highlights some practical considerations to keep in mind as each parish constructs their own preparation plan.

Practical Considerations

The following chart lays out the practical considerations of what each topic would encompass and suggested formats for how to execute them. If you would like any more information on an individual topic, please see the Program Resources section at the end of this document. **The primary format for addressing the different categories while moving through the preparation process should be candidates attending classes led by their catechist.** Other supplemental formats for each category are listed below.

CATEGORY	TOPICS	POSSIBLE SUPPLEMENTAL FORMATS
Invitation and Welcome	Orientation Session: Hold for parents and candidates to become familiar with the preparation process and the expectations and goals for them.	Parent-candidate large group gathering, with time to reflect/share together
	Community Building: Offer candidates intentional ways to build community with their peers.	Shared meal, social gathering, open gym for candidates, or small group classroom activities
Embracing the Call of Jesus	Prayer: Support students in developing a deeper relationship with God through prayer by exposing them to different prayer experiences.	Praying experiences, prayer planner/journal
	Faith-sharing: Peer to Peer: Provide optional opportunities for candidates who feel ready to participate in small group discussion to share questions and thoughts about faith among peers in a safe, judgement free environment.	Youth Alpha, small faith-sharing groups
	Missionary Outreach, Service/Social Justice: Include ways for students to first learn about engaging people on the margins. This is an important time to start differentiating between partaking in service and trying to encounter Jesus in everyone.	Shared missionary service opportunity among candidates with consideration to including sponsors/parents in the service, Just 5 Days, theological reflection on missionary service
	First Year Retreat	Hold your own retreat, team up with other parishes, use outside speakers/resources for the retreat

CATEGORY	TOPICS	POSSIBLE SUPPLEMENTAL FORMATS
Catechetical Moments	Scripture and Tradition: Provide students with the opportunity to grow closer to God in their contemplation of Scripture. Show how other Catholics have developed their relationship with God and his community of followers through our Christian Tradition.	Encourage active participation in Sunday Mass
		Bible study
		Discuss what Eucharistic Adoration is and hold Eucharistic Adoration for candidates after addressing the topic of Sacraments of Initiation
	The Creed: Students learn our statement of belief as Catholics, and what they will be confirming they believe in the Rite of Confirmation. This should be more than memorization, but rather the articles of the creed should be discussed in depth over multiple class sessions.	Stories/examples of holy people who display gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit in their daily lives
	Liturgy and the Liturgical Year: Students should learn about the cycle of the liturgical year and how we grow closer to God through participation in the liturgical life of the Church.	
	Pentecost: Students should learn about the original experience of the disciples of Christ receiving the Holy Spirit and the connection of this event to confirmation, with emphasis on the deeper commitment of being bold witnesses to the faith.	
	Sacraments of Initiation: Students should learn about all the sacraments of initiation and the common theme of entering more fully into the community of faith and becoming a disciple of Jesus.	
	Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit: Students should learn how to recognize the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit in themselves and others.	

CATEGORY	TOPICS	POSSIBLE SUPPLEMENTAL FORMATS
Sacramental Preparation	Discernment of Saints and Sponsors: Help lead and guide the process for candidates to choose who their saint and sponsor will be for confirmation.	Saint research projects, review criteria for confirmation saint and sponsor
	Reconciliation: Offer students the opportunity to prepare themselves for the sacrament of confirmation by learning about and participating in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.	Once sponsor is chosen, sponsor-candidate large group gathering with sponsor-candidate break outs and/or virtual webinar orientation
	Morality: Hold open conversations surrounding morality and what it means to be loved and love like God.	Reconciliation for candidates, Reconciliation with family invited
	Commitment to the Journey: Affirm candidates' commitment to the confirmation preparation journey and readiness to receive the sacrament.	Theology of the Body speaker or lessons, ECHO
Becoming a Disciple of Jesus	Missionary Outreach, Service/Social Justice: Continue to provide opportunities for students to engage with people on the margins and try to encounter Jesus in everyone.	Commitment letter, celebrate Rite of Commitment at Mass, readiness interviews
	Involvement in Parish Community: Discuss how involvement in a parish community is part of entering into and belonging to a community of faith.	Shared missionary service opportunity among candidates with consideration to including sponsors/parents in the service, Just 5 Days, theological reflection on service
	Faith Sharing: Candidate and Sponsor/Parent: Provide opportunities for candidates to dive deeper into their relationship with God and share some of the big questions they are struggling with by entering into dialogue with their parent/sponsor about their faith.	Encourage candidates to get involved in liturgical ministries and/or participate in parish events Sponsor-candidate large group gathering and candidate-sponsor break outs, virtual/in person conversations, encourage ongoing conversations by providing faith-sharing prompts Hold your own retreat, team up with other parishes, use outside speakers/resources for the retreat, Spirit Day retreat

CATEGORY	TOPICS	POSSIBLE SUPPLEMENTAL FORMATS
Becoming a Disciple of Jesus (Continued)	<p>Prayer: Continue to support students in developing a deeper relationship with God through prayer by exposing them to different prayer experiences.</p> <p>Second Year Retreat</p>	
Mystagogy	<p>Reflection on the Confirmation Experience: Create opportunity for new members of the Church to reflect on where they have experienced Jesus throughout the whole confirmation preparation process.</p> <p>Going Forward: Link receiving the sacrament of confirmation to a renewed commitment to discipleship and relationship with Jesus. This should be used as a going forward point in their faith journey, rather than an end of a process.</p>	<p>Small group discussions, written reflections</p> <p>Post-confirmation gathering to share stories/pictures of their confirmation and to share the Scriptures for the Sundays of Easter in light of their sacramental experiences</p> <p>Offer a special invitation to participate in various sacramental experiences throughout the year</p> <p>Hold a celebratory gathering at the first anniversary of their initiation</p> <p>Connect new members of the Church to parish youth ministry</p> <p>Encourage continued or new involvement in liturgical ministries and/ or participation in parish life, especially through worship and service</p>

Parents and Sponsors

In addition to leading students through the preparation process, it is important to provide opportunities for parent and sponsor involvement throughout the preparation process.

Examples of such opportunities include:

- Offer a parent and sponsor orientation session detailing your goals for candidates, goals for parents and sponsors, and what opportunities for spiritual growth will be offered to parents and sponsors.
- Provide regular check-ins to accompany parents, sponsors and the candidates they support throughout the preparation process, helping all to reach their goals.
- Offer intentional participation and/or volunteer opportunities at annual retreats.
- Hold regular or occasional parent/sponsor meetings.
- Encourage and provide resources/guidance for faith sharing between parents and candidates and sponsors and candidates.

Additional Program Resources:

Please see the Confirmation Resources and Activities PDF on the Office of Lifelong Formation website page under Confirmation Policy, found [here](#). This is the primary source of many resources related to confirmation preparation. In addition, check with the publisher that you use for religious education to see what resources related to confirmation preparation that they may offer.

Additional program resources are listed below by category.

Embracing the Call of Jesus

Fr. Mike Schmitz Tips for Praying ([Link](#))

Youth Alpha ([Link](#))

A Teen's DIY Guide to Starting a Small Group ([Link](#))

Helping Young People Encounter Jesus ([Link](#))

Videos on Catholic Social Teaching from the USCCB ([Link](#))

Catechetical Moments

Reading the Bible ([Link](#))

Apostles' Creed Activities ([Link](#))

Ascension: Answering Common Questions ([Link](#))

Sacraments 101: Confirmation ([Link](#))

Sacramental Preparation

Catholic Saints Research Projects ([Link](#))

Theology of the Body for Teens ([Link](#))

ECHO: Theology of the Body Camp ([Link](#))

Becoming a Disciple of Jesus

Just 5 Days Service Mission ([Link](#))

Discover Your Neighbor ([Link](#))

Sponsor-Candidate Faith Sharing Conversation Prompts ([Link](#))

Mystagogy

Unpacking Mystagogy ([Link](#))

Post Confirmation Lesson Plan ([Link](#))

Post Confirmation Guided Reflection ([Link](#))

Retreat Resources

Sealed – Life Teen Confirmation Retreat ([Link](#))

Net Ministries – Retreat Theme Ideas ([Link](#))

Spirit Day (Second Year Retreat) ([Link](#))

Parent and Sponsor Resources

Called to Mercy Confirmation Sponsor Experience ([Link](#))

Conversation Starters for Parents and Sponsors ([Link](#))

Talking Points for Confirmation Sponsors ([Link](#))

Additional Confirmation Policy Resources

2017 Adolescent Confirmation Policy ([Link](#))

Adolescent Confirmation Policy Guidelines ([Link](#))

Confirmation Resources and Activities ([Link](#))