



CONFIRMATION CATCH-UP PROGRAM

Embracing the Call of Jesus

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Program Layout	4
Possible Schedules	4
Pairing with your Confirmation Preparation Program	5
Sessions Overview	6
Session Components	6
Creating Space for Small Group Discussion	7
Partnering with Families	8
Individual Sessions	9
Session One	9
Session Two	12
Session Three	17
Holy Fire	22

INTRODUCTION

Welcome! In 2017, the archdiocese adopted a new Confirmation policy which states that the preparation process for this sacrament should take place over a two-year period. This policy was adopted to better foster a process of ongoing conversion and a richer, deeper understanding of their faith from young childhood into adolescence. While still maintaining our commitment to accompanying your children in their sacramental preparation and supporting you as their first witnesses of the faith, we recognize that for many families, the challenges of the 2020 – 2021 school year made full participation in last year's preparation process limited. We also recognize the deep longing of many to receive the sacrament in community with their current group of classmates and peers.

To address these challenges, this Confirmation Catch-Up Program guide was created by the Archdiocese of Chicago, in partnership with Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, for use in parishes and schools. The goal of this program guide is to provide a supplemental confirmation preparation program to accompany the parish's standard confirmation preparation program for eighth grade candidates who were unable to participate fully in confirmation preparation during their seventh grade year due to COVID-19. This supplemental confirmation preparation program may also be used by any parishes and schools looking to make their upcoming year of confirmation preparation more robust. The Confirmation Catch-Up Program allows candidates to receive the sacrament without delay while ensuring best preparation possible; participation in this program, in addition to the parish's confirmation preparation program, satisfies the archdiocesan Confirmation Policy's two-year requirement. This program is a supplemental program and should accompany a parish's comprehensive confirmation preparation program that still follows all elements of the **Confirmation Policy**.

The program is designed to be flexible enough to be used by every parish. However, if you anticipate needing help to provide this supplemental program to your candidates, please reach out to the archdiocese for support. The program has no required dates of use (other than Holy Fire) and is intended to be adapted to best fit in with your own unique parish confirmation preparation program and group of confirmandi. While we know that this preparation will be shorter than our typical two-year confirmation preparation, this program, when executed in tandem with your parish's confirmation preparation program, is still able to prepare candidates to receive the sacrament of confirmation. The Confirmation Catch-Up Program helps accomplish this by first emphasizing Jesus' call to missionary discipleship and then tying closely to the Renew My Church mission imperatives of making disciples, building community and inspiring witness.

As you work through this leader guide and use it to plan your upcoming year of confirmation preparation, please know that you, your team, your parish community and all your confirmandi remain in our prayers during this important time. If you run into any problems or have questions about the program guide, please reach out to yyam@archchicago.org for support.

PROGRAM LAYOUT

The Confirmation Catch-Up Program has two required program components: three catechist-facilitated sessions and participation in Holy Fire. The three sessions are scheduled to be between 60 – 90 minutes each and while they should be experienced sequentially, they can be implemented at any time prior to the celebration of the sacrament. Each parish is invited to incorporate them where it best fits naturally in conjunction with your confirmation preparation program. Below are a few examples of how you could schedule the sessions to aid in your planning. Holy Fire will be held on November 5th for schools and November 6th for parishes for two and a half hours plus Mass. Holy Fire is a required component not only for candidates participating in this Confirmation Catch-Up Program, but all confirmation candidates this year.

Possible Schedules

Below are three possible ways to schedule the three sessions throughout your year of preparation. These possible schedules are recommendations and the way in which you ultimately organize the sessions in relation to the other components of your parish's confirmation preparation program is up to each individual parish.

Possible Schedule Session Schedule Particulars

Summer Intensive

All 3 sessions may be scheduled to be concentrated together during the Summer months as a summer intensive catch-up session. For example, have session one the last week of June, session two the second week in July and session three the last week of July. This schedule would benefit a program looking to keep their current confirmation preparation program uninterrupted and add this supplemental program before their program begins. If choosing this schedule, you may need to revisit the main themes of sessions two and three with your candidates as the year of preparation progresses and they have more time to process and develop. In addition, make sure to leave enough time in between sessions for candidates to complete the necessary family activities (see individual sessions below).

Holy Fire Centered

The sessions may be scheduled to frame the Holy Fire experience. Sessions one and two would occur prior to Holy Fire and session three would occur after Holy Fire. For example, session one could occur in September, session two in October, and session three in January. This schedule would benefit a program looking to further implement Holy Fire into their overall confirmation preparation program. If choosing this schedule, make sure to examine the Holy Fire Leader Guide when it is available in September. You may want to expand a session or otherwise include pre-retreat discussions with questions from the leader guide in your confirmation preparation program.

Possible Schedule Session Schedule Particulars

Building Throughout the Year

The sessions may be scheduled to be spread out over the course of the year. For example, session one could occur in September, session two could occur in December, and session three could occur in February. This schedule would benefit a program looking to give ample time to candidates to develop and grow between each session. If choosing this schedule, make sure to put an emphasis on bridging the sessions (taking extra time if needed) since they are further apart.

Pairing with your Confirmation Preparation Program

The Confirmation Catch-Up Program is not intended to be a standalone program. It must be done in conjunction with the parish's comprehensive confirmation preparation program to be a useful vehicle for preparing adolescent candidates to receive the sacrament of confirmation. It focuses specifically on embracing the call to know, love and follow Jesus and does not address other elements that are also essential for our candidates' confirmation preparation, such as catechetical moments that lead to a deeper understanding of the sacrament itself. We recognize that parishes will still need to look at their own two-year confirmation preparation and make adjustments for this upcoming year. It will be up to each individual parish to structure their upcoming year of confirmation preparation to ensure that their candidates are touching on all the elements necessary to prepare them to receive the sacrament of confirmation.

After a year of so much struggle, offering families a clear and welcoming path to deeper engagement in the life of the Church is a critical pastoral priority. The process and resources presented here are designed to help parishes engage and support families that are seeking to return to a fuller participation in Church life and supporting them in their lifelong journey as missionary disciples.

SESSIONS OVERVIEW

The core content of the program is broken into three sessions:

- Who is God?
- What is discipleship?
- How can I be a missionary disciple?

The three sessions are adapted from Maryknoll's **Unit One: Encountering Jesus** from their Missionary Discipleship Institute. The objective and key themes of each section are highlighted in the table below.

Session Title	Highlights	Objective
Session One: Who is God?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emphasizes a central element of our relationship with God: God is love• Explores what it means to be loved by God and connects lived experiences of love	Discover that we come to know God's love most profoundly through his Son, Jesus
Session Two: What is discipleship?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Examines what it means to be a disciple and the call to share God's love with others• Looks to Jesus as the embodiment of God's love and example of sharing God's love with others	Explore where Jesus shared love in his life, and how we are called to practice what he modeled
Session Three: How can I be a missionary disciple?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emphasizes that all Christians who have encountered the love of God in Jesus are called to be missionary disciples• Focuses on what living the life of a missionary disciple can look like in our own Church communities	Discern how Jesus is calling us to live as disciples in our world and where God calls us to "go forth"

Session Components

Each session contains the same main components, listed below, though the order of when these elements occur varies from session to session. Each session also provides time ranges as estimates for how long each component may take. These are just suggestions and may be adapted based on each parish's session length and program structure. In addition, each session also has a list of materials needed to run the session. If you do not have the materials listed, feel free to substitute similar materials as you see fit. In addition, the sessions can be adapted to occur in a virtual setting.

If you need assistance converting the sessions to an online format, please reach out to yyam@archchicago.org for support.

- Opening/Closing Prayer – Each session begins and ends with prayer. These prayers are not isolated events, but rather they work together with the rest of the sessions to provide opportunities for candidates to reflect, communicate with God and grow in their relationship with him.
- Catechist Led – Each session has catechist led sections where the catechist explicitly teaches the students using lectures, demonstrations or aids. The catechist may ask the candidates questions during this time, but they are primarily leading the class.
- Class Activity – Each session contains time when the class is actively participating as the whole group in a discussion or activity.
- Small Group Discussion – Each session has time devoted to small group discussion. This is an essential element in these sessions when students can express their feelings and faith in a small group of peers. For more information on the small group discussions and the catechist's role during this time, see the **Creating Space for Small Group Discussion** section below.
- Individual Processing – Each session provides time for candidates to reflect on their own and take the time to listen to what God is calling them to in their hearts.
- Family Activity – Each session also includes an at-home portion to be completed as a family before the next session. Each family activity is explained in the program guide for the catechist/catechetical leader and on the family activity worksheet (found in each session below) for the family. Please see the **Partnering with Families** section for more information about working with families during this program.

One item that the candidates will need for all three sessions in the program is an individual journal. This can be a journal that they are using in other elements of their confirmation preparation, a self-made journal or a **digital journal**. The purpose of this journal is to keep track of personal notes/reflections throughout all sessions and have their reflections in one place so they can easily be referenced, especially in support of bridging the sessions.

Creating Space for Small Group Discussion

Each session of the retreat will have the opportunity for small group discussion. It is our hope that over the course of this program, the students will be able to come together to share ideas and be open to participating in faith sharing during some of these small group discussions. In order to accomplish that goal, there are a few things to keep in mind when creating and introducing these small groups to the candidates, as well as facilitating them.

- Plan your small groups ahead to time. The small groups should remain the same throughout all three sessions to give the candidates time to build a space where they feel comfortable sharing. We recommend the small groups be about four to six candidates, but group size can differ depending on your group of candidates and catechist(s).
- If the candidates are not already familiar with each other, do an icebreaker and introduction prior to the first small group discussion. If necessary, take some time during the first session when you first introduce the small groups to do this.
- Explain what the purpose of the small groups will be to the candidates. Let them know ahead of time that they are going to be invited to enter into not only a discussion, but also sharing about their faith with their small groups. Explain that in order for the small groups to be the most meaningful experience possible, that they must be willing to listen to each other without judgment and be open to sharing their thoughts, beliefs and reactions with the group.

- Facilitate the discussions. If you are running this program with just one small group of candidates, or if you have multiple catechists who are available to assist in this preparation program, you can be active facilitators of the small group discussions. You can take up the role of accompanying your small group through the discussions and faith sharing by being ready to ask questions to direct the conversation, help a candidate go further or guide them if they are stuck. If you are the only catechist for multiple small groups of candidates, you will have to take the role of a roaming facilitator. This means that during small group discussion, you will want to roam around the room, taking the time to check in with each group intentionally and answer questions or guide them if they are stuck before moving on to the next small group.

Partnering with Families

For this program, as in all faith formation, it is essential to partner with the families of the candidates as they go through this preparation. We are striving to support parents as the first witnesses of the faith and offering clear opportunities for family involvement as this is a crucial part of this endeavor. For this reason, each session includes a “family activity” that the candidates are to complete at home with their families. We have included some suggestions on how to successfully invite the families to fully participate in these activities.

- Communicate with the families throughout the preparation process. Send this letter (**English, Spanish or Polish**) to the families before you start the catch-up program so that they know what the catch-up program is and how they will be involved. Then, continue to follow up with and check in with families throughout the preparation process, especially if you notice a candidate who does not seem to be doing the at-home portion of the sessions.
- Every family looks a little different, and the language we use to refer to families should be inclusive of that. A candidate’s family can be anyone: some candidates may ask their parents to participate in the family activities, while other may ask their grandparents or older siblings.
- Be clear about what you are asking of the family. Everyone is at a different comfort level when it comes to being open and sharing about their faith experience, and the same is true for families of the candidates. Each session’s family activity is presented in a worksheet for the families that includes an overview of what the candidate is experiencing in the session and then exactly what the family activity entails. Make sure to share the family activity worksheets from each session with the families so that they know what the candidates will be asking of them and can take time to prepare, if they wish.
- Use the family activities to tie into other elements of your preparation program that involve the family, such as selecting a sponsor, choosing a confirmation saint or participating in missionary service.

INDIVIDUAL SESSIONS

These sessions are adapted from the Missionary Discipleship Institute from Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers

Session One

Materials: index cards (three per candidate), whiteboard, dry erase markers, pens, journals, Bibles (or Bible passages printed out on worksheets), **place cards** (more than one per student), **music clip** and **Family Activity Sheet**.

Opening Prayer: Take what you need (5 – 10 minutes)

- Read Genesis 1:26-27 aloud: “Then God said: Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the tame animals, all the wild animals, and all the creatures that crawl on the earth. God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”
- Share that we know that “we” or “mankind” are created in God’s image, the image of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and that we are all called to care for one another and share God’s love with all people. Ask each candidate to write at least 5 things in their journal that they would want to share with another person today. Examples of this are hope, love, courage, understanding, etc.
- Ask the candidates to pick three from their brainstormed list and spend time praying for someone who needs each one of the items they mentioned. Model this for them before they begin. For example, you could say the following:
 - Joy: I want to pray for someone who needs joy in their life right now. I want them to feel how I do when my friend says something that makes me laugh or my mom surprises me with my favorite dinner. Even if they have been sad lately or are having trouble finding something to be happy about at this moment, I want them to find at least something small that sparks joy inside of them. I know that God is our light, and we can always find joy in him, so I ask that God gives joy to someone who needs it today. Amen.
- As they finish the prayer for each of the three things that they want to give someone, have them write each thing on its own index card. Collect the index cards and save them for the end of this session.

Catechist Led (part one): Overview (1 – 3 minutes)

- Explain that over the course of their preparation, the class is going to explore how they can live out God’s mission for them, or what God is calling them to do.
- Explain that in order to understand God’s mission, we need to consider what we know about God, the one who is sending us on this mission.

Class Activity: “Chalk talk” on *Who Is God?* (7 – 12 minutes)

- Write “Who is God?” on the board. In their journal, have students write down at least three words or phrases that they associate with God.
- After a couple of minutes, lead the students through a “chalk talk.” Students can either take turns passing off dry erase markers and writing one of their words/phrases on the board, or you can call on candidates and write their responses on the board yourself.

- You can have more than one student writing something on the board at a time, but challenge them to be actively reading other students' responses so that they do not repeat a word or phrase.
- Depending on your group, you may need to add some descriptors yourself or stop the activity before the students have all their responses on the board if they have many responses.
- When finished, read through some of the students' responses aloud and asks students to raise their hand if they also wrote the same/similar description in their journal.
- Throughout this process, ask some students to volunteer why they wrote a specific word/phrase. During this conversation, you can ask the class to point out any words/phrases that stuck out from the list, including which words/phrases were the most common among all the students.

Catechist Led (part two): God is love (5 – 7 minutes)

- Share that, as Catholics, our primary relationship with God is that God is love.
- Read 1 John 4:16, which says “We have come to know and to believe in the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him.”
- Highlight other positive descriptors on the board (i.e.: creator, Father, forgiving) and how those all speak to God being love.
- Share that we are made in God's image to love God, each other and creation.
- State that in order to more deeply understand who God is, we need to look at what we know about love.

Individual Processing: Journal prompt: “How do we know?” (10 – 20 minutes)

- As this is the first journal of the program, take a moment to explain what individual processing time will be used for in these sessions. Invite the candidates to always use this time to reflect on the questions provided, listen to what God is telling them and record their responses.
- In their journal, have students respond to the following questions. Let them know that they will use their responses moving forward, so encourage them to focus on taking this time to reflect and gather their thoughts.
 - Who are people in your life who you know love you?
 - How do you know that these people love you? (Specifically, what do they DO? Examples: hug me, feed me, house me, say “I love you,” etc.)
 - How do you show other people that you love them?
- While the students are journaling, erase the board to get ready for the next element.
- After a period of reflection, give students time to create their **place cards** that will be used during the family activity for this session. Whatever they do not finish during the session, they will need to finish before the family dinner activity. Students should make a place card for every family member who they anticipate will be participating in the family dinner. On each place card, have the candidate reflect on what they just wrote in their journal, and then add their responses (either in words or images) to the following questions on the place cards:
 - What is the name of the person?
 - How has your family member shown love to you?
 - How will you show love to your family member?

Catechist Lead (part three): Sharing about: “How do we know?” (10 – 15 minutes)

- Ask students for some of their responses, writing a particular person (such as mom, dad, coach, grandma, etc.) that students share, creating a list on the board as you go. In addition, ask students how they know that that particular person loves them and next to the person’s “name” (mom, teacher, etc.) create a list of concrete loving actions.
- Add to each list of actions by collecting answers from different students about how they have experienced love from the “names” on the board. Encourage students to get specific (i.e.: if a student says something like “She supports me,” encourage them to go a step further to share how she supports him or her, such as “She gives me high-fives.”
- At the end, point out that we know someone loves us by how they act toward us, speak toward us, if they seem happy to be around us, etc.
- Explain that, as we can see from the responses, love is really about how we treat other people.
- Add God to the chart above and ask students to share how we know God loves us.
- Collect answers about how God loves us, calling out the connection between the examples that the class came up with of how other people in our lives love us and how we know God loves us.
 - Take a minute here to make this connection between how we know God’s love and Jesus. You can do this in a leading way, but posing the question: Can we think of anyone in our faith tradition who forgives people he loves, eats food together with people he loves, etc.? > Jesus! Yes, God came through Jesus and shared love in many of these same ways as other people in our lives, so we know this kind of love is holy because we can see Jesus himself loving this way.

Small Group Discussion: What does it mean to be loved by God? (10 – 20 minutes)

- Share that we can also look to the Bible to try to fully understand what it means to be loved by God.
- Have students break into their small groups to read the following passages as a group and discuss the questions below.
- As this is the first small group discussion of the program, take a moment to explain what small group discussion will be used for in these sessions and invite students to be open to participating and sharing during these discussions. See the **Creating Space for Small Group Discussion** section above for more information on how to introduce this part of the sessions.
- Once introductions have been made and procedure established, have groups move on to reading and discussing the Bible passages.
- Passages:
 - John 3:16 – “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.”
 - 1 John 4:7-11 – “Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love. In this way the love of God was revealed to us: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might have life through him. In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another.”
 - Romans 5:8 – “But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.”
- Questions:
 - God’s love is beautiful, selfless and radical. How do you feel after reading the sacrifice that God made out of his love for us?
 - Has there ever been a time in your life when you worried that God might not love you? If there was, why?

- How does it make you feel to know now that God knew we were sinners, but still loved us so much that he gave the world Jesus?
- What do you think we can learn about love by looking at God's gift of love through Jesus?

Closing Prayer: Knowing God's love through Jesus/Take what you need (5 – 7 minutes)

- State that after reading the passages and discussing in our small groups, we know that the most profound way that we know about God's amazing love for us is through his son, Jesus. Share that, as we end this first session, we invite Jesus more fully into our lives to help us to love. Invite students to reflect on this as they listen to the song for closing prayer.
- Play music from Hillsong “**Our God is Love.**”
- Set out the index cards somewhere where students can access them before leaving, being careful not to disturb students while they are watching the video.
- After the song ends, share that we know God loves us and desires to give us all that we need. As a community, we can be here to support one another, pray for one another and show love to one another. So, as the students leave, invite them to stop at the index cards and take something that they need this week, knowing that it comes with a prayer from someone in their class.

Family Activity: Family Dinner

- Please send this **Family Activity Sheet – Session One** home with each of your students. The family activity sheet will both share an overview of what was discussed this session with the student's family and outline the family activity that is to be completed before the next session.
- Share with the students that you will use part of the family activity in the next session to encourage them to complete it in time for the next session.
- The main components of the family activity are:
 - **Read:** John 15:1-17
 - **Reflect:** What do you think this passage says about God's love for us? What do you think it means to remain in Jesus? How is God calling us to treat one another? How is this relevant to your life? Why is it sometimes hard for you to love like God does? How do you ask for God's help when it gets hard to love OR how do you want to ask for God's help moving forward when it gets hard to love?
 - **Act:** Sit down together for a family meal to eat, read the Gospel and participate in focused family discussion on the reflection questions. Use the special place cards that each child creates prior to the meal.

Session Two

Materials: video, whiteboard, dry erase markers, **Evangelii Gaudium Quote Worksheet**, pen, journal, Bibles (or Bible passages printed out on worksheets), index cards, **prayer video**, **Family Activity Sheet**.

Opening Prayer: Who is my neighbor? (5 – 10 minutes)

- Have each student open their journal and use the whole page to draw three expanding circles (they need to be big enough to write in). In the smallest circle have them write the word family, in the middle circle have them write community and in the third circle have them write margins. Model this on the board for them to follow along, using the example below.

- Pray aloud with the students: Now we pray for all those who show us love and those we have failed to love. We remember those we love and who have taught us about love, and we ask for God's Spirit to help us go beyond our comfort zones to encounter those who we ignore or who challenge us and those who live on the margins of our lives
- Give the candidates a few minutes to add to their circles by:
 - Writing the name of a person or people from their family who show them love. (Place this name in the family circle)
 - Writing the name or names of people in their community who have shown them love. (Place this name in the community circle).
 - Writing the name or names of people in their community who they ignore, who challenge them or who live on the margins of their life. (Place this name in the margins circle).
 - Students may have a hard time identifying people in the margins of their life, so it may be helpful to call out some examples of people who may be in the margins, such as: strangers, the sick, the elderly, prisoners, immigrants, people who don't fit in at school, etc.
- End together in the following prayer: Loving God, we pray for all these people who love us and who we are called to love. Give us hearts that are open to love and help us to go beyond our comfort zones to encounter others and to love all your children. Amen.



Catechist Led (part one): Bridging Sessions (3 – 5 minutes)

- Recap previous session's themes:
 - God is love.
 - We are made in God's image to love. This is our mission.
 - Love is about how we treat others.
 - We know God's love for us most profoundly through Jesus.
- Relate in Family Activity:
 - As we read with our families, we are called to remain in Jesus and love each other as he has loved us.
 - But, from our discussion, we also know that it can be hard to love others as God does.

- Invite students to take a moment to write in their journal how a family member responded to this discussion question: How do you ask God for help when it gets hard to love OR how do you want to ask for God's help moving forward when it gets hard to love?
- Let them know we will go back to these in small group discussion.
- Introduce today's main topic:
 - Today we are going to talk about discipleship.

Class Activity: Video and “chalk talk” on *What makes a Disciple?* (7 – 12 minutes)

- Play a **video** (start the video at 0:58 seconds) in which children respond to questions about discipleship.
- Invite students to jot down their own thoughts or responses to the questions in their journal, or if there was a response from one of the children in the video that stuck out to them.
- After the video, write the word “disciple” on the board and lead the students through a “chalk talk.” Invite students to share what they think the word disciple means, or what makes a disciple.
- Students can either take turns passing off dry erase markers and writing on the board, or you can call on candidates and write their responses on the board yourself.
- You can have more than one student writing something on the board at a time, but challenge them to be actively reading other students' responses so that they do not repeat a word or phrase.
- Depending on your group, you may need to ask some leading questions to get more responses or stop the activity before the students have all their responses on the board if they have many responses.

Catechist Led (part two): Called to share God's love (10 – 15 minutes)

- Share Pope Francis' definition of disciple from *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel) on **a worksheet** with the students.
 - Today, as the Church seeks to experience a profound missionary renewal, there is a kind of preaching which falls to each of us as a daily responsibility. It has to do with bringing the Gospel to the people we meet, whether we bring it to our neighbors or complete strangers. This is the informal preaching that takes place in the middle of a conversation, something along the lines of what a missionary does when visiting a home. Being a disciple means being constantly ready to bring the love of Jesus to others, and this can happen unexpectedly and in any place: on the street, in a city square, during work or on a journey. (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 127)
- Invite the students to read through once on their own, underlining or highlighting the important words or phrases in Pope Francis' definition and circling any part of the definition that they do not understand.
- After giving students time to read on their own, read together as a class. Ask students to share with the whole class sections that stuck out to them as important. If the words are already on the board from the “chalk talk” about what makes a disciple, underline them. If they are new aspects about discipleship, add them to the board.
- Also give students the opportunity to ask about any part of the definition that did not make sense to them. Talk through what that section means and see if it is something else that should be added to the board.
- Have students save this sheet of paper with the definition for later in the session.

- Check for student comprehension by asking the leading questions below or asking a student to summarize. While their exact responses will vary, make sure that students are understanding the main take-aways, even if you have to call them out directly.
 - **Q:** Who is the Church? **A:** We are!
 - **Q:** What is our mission? **A:** To love
 - **Q:** What is the Church's mission? **A:** To go out and share love

Small Group Discussion (part one): Following the example of others who are sharing God's love (7 – 15 minutes)

- State that the Church has been called to go out and share love throughout history; Jesus did it, our saints and holy people did it, members of the Church did it, and now we are called to share love too. Being a disciple means being constantly ready to bring the love of God to others, and this can happen unexpectedly and in any place: on the street, in a city square, during work or on a journey.
- Share that, luckily, we have examples of other people sharing God's love in our own lives that we can follow. You are going to talk together about some examples of discipleship in your own life. While participating in this discussion, make a note in your journal about anyone you talk about. It may be someone who you want to follow up with for this session's family activity.
- Have students break into their small groups and first share a response to the question they asked during their family activity (what they wrote at the beginning of this session). These responses can point to models of discipleship.
 - How do you ask God for help when it gets hard to love OR how do you want to ask for God's help moving forward when it gets hard to love?
- Then, have students discuss the questions below, explaining that one person may have more than one answer to the questions:
 - Who is someone in your life today who is a model for discipleship? Parent, Grandparent, Teacher, etc.?
 - To whom specifically do they show Jesus' love? How do they show them love?
 - How do they receive love from these people whom they reach out to?

Small Group Discussion (part two): Following the example of Jesus and sharing God's love (12 – 20 minutes)

- Pause the discussion here. Share with students that, in addition to examples in our own life, we also have another example of how to share and receive God's love. Jesus is the embodiment of God's love and we can look in the Gospels to find examples of how he shared God's love with others and received love from them in return.
- Assign each small group at least two Bible passages, one from each category (you can have groups do more as time allows), of a Gospel story where Jesus showed and received love. Some examples are listed below, but feel free to include your own selection:
 - Received Love: Luke 2:1-7; Luke 2:41-52; Luke 7:36-38; Luke 23:50-56
 - Showed Love: Luke 5:17-26; Luke 5:27-32; Luke 17:11-19; Luke 19:1-10
- Have students break back into their small groups to read their passages as a group and discuss the questions below:
 - Who specifically does Jesus love? How does he show them love?
 - Who specifically loves Jesus? How do they show him love?

- Does Jesus receive love from the same people to whom he shows love?
- How can you follow Jesus's example of sharing love with others?
- How are you called to be a disciple and share God's love today?

Individual Processing: How can I practice what Jesus and others modeled?

(10 – 15 minutes)

- Have the students put the sheet of paper with Pope Francis' definition of disciple from earlier in the session into their Journal.
- Before they write down their response, make sure to encourage students to take time to reflect and open their heart up to God before responding. You could even have a couple of minutes when they do not write anything at all, just discern where God is calling them by reflecting on their response to the questions.
- Based on the conversations they participated in earlier in the session and the reflection they just did, have students write down at least a few sentences in their journal in response to each of the following questions:
 - Who are some people on the margins of my community (who do I exclude or ignore)?
 - Do I think that God calls me to show love to those people? Why or why not?
 - How might Jesus be responding to these people?
 - To whom might Jesus be calling me to go give and receive love?

Closing Prayer: Who is my neighbor? *(5 – 7 minutes)*

- As students finish reflecting, draw the connection that the ways in which Jesus gave and received love are the same ways that we are called to give and receive love. When we do this, we are walking as Jesus did and bringing God's kingdom to Earth.
- Look back to the overlapping circles you drew in your journal at the beginning of this session. Everyone you wrote down there, no matter what circle they are in, are your neighbors. That means you are called to love everyone as Jesus loves them.
- Share that, as we end this second session, we invite Jesus more fully into our lives to help us to love all of our neighbors like he does. Invite students to reflect on this, and specifically how they can love everyone whom they wrote down in their circles, as they listen to the song for closing prayer.
- Play music from Tauren Wells "**Love Is Action.**"

Family Activity: Disciple Interview

- Please send this **Family Activity Sheet – Session Two** home with each of your students. The family activity sheet will both share an overview of what was discussed this session with the student's family and outline the family activity that is to be completed before the next session.
- Share with the students that you will use part of the family activity in the next session to encourage them to complete it in time for the next session.
- Share that the person they are interviewing could be someone whom they are thinking about selecting (or have already selected) as their sponsor
- The main components of the family activity are:
 - **Read:** Matthew 28:1-20

- **Reflect:** Have you ever done something that scared you, but you knew it was the right thing to do? How did you feel afterwards? Why? How does God help or encourage people in this passage to go forth in joy? What challenges or fears do they face? How do you think they feel after they do what God asks of them? Why?
- **Act:** Select someone in your life whom you can look to as a model of how to be a disciple and ask them to have a conversation with you. Read through the passage together and answer the questions above. Then, interview the person you selected by asking them the following questions:
 - How did you come to know God’s love for you?
 - How do you live out your call to discipleship?
 - What do you do when you struggle to love others like Jesus did?
 - Who is someone whom you look to today as an example of how to be a disciple? Why?

Session Three

Materials: video, **Evangelii Gaudium Quotes Worksheet**, pen, journal, Bible (or Bible passages printed out on worksheets), **prayer video**, **Family Activity Sheet**.

Opening Prayer: *Where are you called to go forth? (5 – 10 minutes)*

- Read Matthew 4:18-22 aloud to the class.
- Share that this is when Jesus first calls people individually to be his disciples. Up to this point, they were probably confused and didn’t know exactly what Jesus was asking of them. But they knew that Jesus called them, so they followed anyway. Just like the first disciples we may have a feeling that Jesus is calling to us and that feeling may be confusing as well. We need to ask God for the courage to answer the call to discipleship and put our trust in wherever God is calling us to go.
- After reading the passage and offering the short reflection, invite students to write a 10-word prayer in their journal asking God to help them listen to Jesus’ call to be a disciple.

Catechist Led (part one): *We are called to share love (3 – 5 minutes)*

- Recap previous session’s themes:
 - We are called to be a disciple and share God’s love with others.
 - We know that Jesus is the embodiment of God’s love, and we can look to him as a model of how to love.
 - We are called to put loving others and receiving love from others into practice as Jesus did.
- Bridging the sessions:
 - Call attention to the family activity from the last session that focused on talking to a model of discipleship in their own life. Remind them that you will need the responses to those questions later in the session.
- Moving forward with the last session, ask if any students know what being a missionary means, and if they know anyone who is a missionary.
- Explain that Pope Francis says that we are not only disciples, but that we are “missionary disciples” (so, we are ALL missionary disciples).
- Explain that students are going to explore what it means to be a missionary.

Class Activity: Video and timed journal on being a missionary in the church
(7 – 10 minutes)

- Before students watch the video, instruct them to think about what images or words stand out to them. Let the students know that, immediately following the video, they are going to do a timed journal on their reaction to what they see in the video. Have the students wait to write anything in their journal until after the video.
- Play the video **Our Missionary Pope**.
- After the video clip has been played, set a timer for a short period (2 – 4 minutes) and have students write down any thoughts that come to mind about what they notice or anything that sounds interesting, whether it be words or images.

Catechist Led (part two): We are all called to be missionary disciples
(5 – 10 minutes)

- Share the following quotes from *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel) on a **worksheet** with the students.
 - “Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are ‘disciples’ and ‘missionaries,’ but rather that we are always ‘missionary disciples.’” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 120)
 - “The word of God constantly shows us how God challenges those who believe in him ‘to go forth.’ Abraham received the call to set out for a new land. Moses heard God’s call: ‘Go, I send you’ and led the people towards the promised land. To Jeremiah, God says: ‘To all whom I send you, you shall go.’ All of us are called to take part in this new missionary ‘going forth.’ Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the ‘peripheries’ in need of the light of the Gospel.” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 20)
 - “If the whole Church takes up this missionary impulse, she has to go forth to everyone without exception. But to whom should she go first? When we read the Gospel we find a clear indication: not so much our friends and wealthy neighbours, but above all the poor and the sick, those who are usually despised and overlooked, ‘those who cannot repay you’ (Lk 14:14).” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 48)
- Read through the passages for your class, inviting the students to underline or highlight the important words or phrases from these passages and circling any part of the passage that they do not understand.
- Give the students a minute or two after you read the passages to them to go over them again on their own.
- After giving students time to read on their own, break the class into their small groups.

Small Group Discussion (part one): We are all called to be missionary disciples
(7 – 15 minutes)

- Ask students to share with their small group sections that stuck out to them as important. Students can also bring up any questions they had about the passages to their group.
- Make sure to check in with each group to specifically see if there are any questions about the passages that they want to bring to you.
- Based on the passages and what stood out to them, have students discuss the following question: “What do you think it means to be a ‘missionary disciple?’”

- After discussing the answer to the question, have every student write down the answer they came up with as a group in their journal.
- Pause discussions and have one person from each group report their group's answer to the whole class.

Catechist Led (part three): The life of a missionary disciple (3 – 7 minutes)

- After each group has a chance to share, lead the groups into the next discussion.
- Explain that now that we know what it means to be a missionary disciple, we can look for examples of what people being missionary disciples looks like in our Church community.
- Share that in their small groups, students will first read and discuss a few stories from the Bible about how the first Christians lived out their call to be missionary disciples. Then, each person in the small group will have the opportunity to share how the person they interviewed for last session's family activity is living out their call to be a missionary disciple.

Small Group Discussion (part two): The life of a missionary disciple (12 – 20 minutes)

- Assign each small group at least two Bible passages (you can have groups do more as time allows) of a story from the New Testament where disciples, people who had walked with Jesus, were living out this call to missionary discipleship. Some examples are listed below, but feel free to include your own selection:
 - Luke 10:1-9; Acts 2:1-12; Acts 2:42-47; Acts 3:1-10
- Have students break back into their small groups to read their passages as a group and discuss the questions below:
 - How did you see the disciples living out this call that Pope Francis talks about?
 - How did they treat the people they interacted with?
 - How do you think they felt when they were called to go out and make disciples of others, doing new things and speaking to many people in the name of Jesus? How would you feel?
 - What changed in the people around them as a result of the disciples' actions? How were the disciples themselves changed?
- Then, make sure each student has a turn to answer the first question about the person that they interviewed, and then discuss the rest of the questions together:
 - How do you see people in your own communities living out this call to be missionary disciples?
 - This is how the person you interviewed responded to the question, "How do you live out your call to discipleship?"
 - How does it compare to how the disciples lived out the call?
 - What is something you want to go back and ask them about living out their call after hearing about the disciples in action and discussing with your small group?

Individual Processing: Where am I called to "go forth?" (12 – 20 minutes)

- Invite students to read the questions below. Then, encourage them to sit with God before responding, as you read a prayer and they enter into a time of reflection. Encourage students to ask God to be with them, to inspire them and then open up their hearts to God so they can hear his call.
- Read the prayer of the Holy Spirit:
Together, let us pray:
Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful. And kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth

your Spirit and they shall be created. And you will renew the face of the earth.
Lord, by the light of the Holy Spirit, you have taught the hearts of your faithful. In the same Spirit, help us to relish what is right and always rejoice in your consolation.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

- Based on the conversations they participated in earlier in the session and the reflection they just did, have students write down at least a few sentences in response to each question:
 - What is one way you might answer the call to be a missionary disciple in your own life?
 - Think about one way you could respond to people **in each circle of your neighbors** (family, community, margins). Reflect back to the diagram you made in session two, if needed.
 - In what ways would your actions affect your neighbor?
 - In what ways would you be transformed in these interactions?

Closing Prayer: *Where are you called to go forth? (7 – 10 minutes)*

- Share that, as we end this third session, we invite Jesus more fully into our lives to help us to go forth into our communities as missionary disciples. Invite students to reflect on this, and then answer this question in their journal: Where is God calling me specifically to go out and be a missionary disciple?
- Play music from John Michael Talbot “**Here I Am Lord**” (with Spanish captions) while students respond to the question. Pass out index cards while the students are responding.
- When the song ends, ask each person to choose one word from their card that is where they think God may be calling them to go. Then have them put down their cards and get in a prayerful position (they will take these cards with them when they leave).
- Pray over the class:
 - “God, by our baptism you have called and anointed each of us to be missionary disciples, today we come together and consider where we are called to encounter others in our lives. Hear us now as we offer a word as prayer and understanding of where you are calling each one of us to go and live your mission of love.”
- Go around the class, inviting each person to say their one word. Remind them that it is okay if other people have the same word as them (depending on your group, you may want to allow them to say pass if they are not ready to share).
- End the prayer by saying: “God we pray for your love and courage as we leave this place to live as missionary disciples in our world. Amen.”

Family Activity: Saints are missionary disciples

- Please send this **Family Activity Sheet – Session Three** home with each of your students. The family activity sheet will both share an overview of what was discussed this session with the student’s family and outline the family activity that is to be completed (you will have to set an end date for this activity).
- Before participating in the family activity, candidates will research a saint that they can look to as a model of how to be a missionary disciple. This could be a saint they are thinking about selecting (or have already selected) as their confirmation saint. They will use their research to answer the following questions about their saint’s life and then they will share their responses with their family during the family activity:
 - How did they come to know God’s love for them?
 - How did they discover their calling (married life, religious life, minister to the sick, etc.)? How did they make a difference to others by living out this calling?

- What is a struggle they faced as they tried to live out their call to discipleship? How did they overcome it?
- What is one trait from them that you want to emulate?
- The main components of the family activity are:
 - **Read:** Luke 24:13-35
 - **Reflect:** When it says that their hearts were “burning,” what do you think that felt like? Have you ever felt like God was with you during a difficult time? How did God call you to respond?
 - **Act:** Research a saint that you can look to as a model of how to be a missionary disciple. Then, go on a prayer walk with your family. Talk to them about the research you did on the saint. You can also ask your family members to share how they think God may be calling them. At the end of the walk, take a moment to stop and offer the time spent walking and talking together in the presence of God—like the disciples on the road to Emmaus that you read about—up to God as a prayer.

HOLY FIRE

Holy Fire is designed for young people in grades six through twelve and all students preparing to receive the sacrament of confirmation to celebrate the gift of faith. This year, Holy Fire will feature a diverse lineup of speakers that help young people process and respond to the tumultuous events of 2020 and 2021 as missionary disciples and a community of believers. Holy Fire is an important opportunity to make disciples of the youth in the Archdiocese, and to continue the unitive work of Renew My Church by bringing young people together as one community of missionary disciples.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Holy Fire 2021 will feature virtual content to be streamed at parish and school sites across the Archdiocese of Chicago. More information about Holy Fire will be released closer to the date. The Holy Fire Leader Guide that contains pre- and post-retreat processing questions will be distributed in September. Please see the [Holy Fire website](#) for more details and [Cardinal Cupich's letter](#) calling all confirmandi to participate in this communal experience of faith.