



Leader's Guide

Holy Fire 2021

As you guide your young people to and through Holy Fire, please use these materials to help them enter more deeply into the experience. **To prepare your participants before Holy Fire**, you can engage them in the prayer exercises, reflections, and faith conversations offered below, as well as introduce them to elements of the experience itself. To help your **young people process and expand their Holy Fire experience**, you can have them reflect on their experience, discern how they should put their faith into action, and share their experience with others using the suggestions offered below. All of the material found on this guide is optional and supplementary to Holy Fire and can be adapted to best fit your program and your youth. If you feel suggested material would work with your youth in a different way than listed, please do not hesitate to adapt the element to fit your needs. No one knows your community and your young people like you, and therefore only you can use this leader's guide to make Holy Fire the most meaningful experience possible for your young people.

PREPARATION

Walk through the Holy Fire Experience

Share that Holy Fire is an experience for thousands of young people to join together in a moment of encounter with Jesus Christ through prayer, celebration, community, worship and fun. Go over the different elements of Holy Fire, found in the Holy Fire Section below. . If you think any of the elements will require more explanation ahead of time, walk your young people through what they can expect for those specific elements of Holy Fire. In addition, share that the Cardinal and Bishops believe that Holy Fire is an important spiritual experience and communal celebration for young people of faith for all Confirmandi within the archdiocese. This year, while gathering together will happen over a virtual platform rather in the same stadium, it is important for the young people to know they are a part of a large and diverse Body of Christ.

Why then is Holy Fire on two separate days? Holy Fire is designed to unite sixth through ninth graders in the Archdiocese of Chicago (and beyond!) in praise and worship. While we would love for our entire young Church to be able to gather together on a single day, the pastoral need to provide equal and equitable access to both Catholic schools and parish formation programs requires that we offer Holy Fire on both Friday and Saturday. Parishes and schools are welcome to join on either day, however practical realities such as school family weekend availability and parish youth attending

public schools during the week most often means that Catholic schools participate on Friday and parishes participate on Saturday. If your group consists of both parish and Catholic school youth, you can build community around the experience by doing preparation and follow up activities with the entire group.

Praise and Worship Music

There will be concerts and other musical moments during Holy Fire, taking the form of Praise and Worship music. Praise and Worship is an important part of the spiritual journey and can be a new experience for many young people. To prepare your young people to participate in Praise and Worship, you can share [this video](#) that explains how to participate, read the **Canticle of Mary** (Luke 1:46-55), and have your young people reflect on what they are grateful for in their life. Then, encourage your young people to use this time of Praise and Worship during Holy Fire to thank God for all their blessings.

PRAYER AND REFLECTION ACTIVITIES

Invite the Holy Spirit into your Journey

Have your young people ask the Holy Spirit to be with them as they prepare for and participate in Holy Fire. Pray the prayer, Come Holy Spirit (found [here](#)), all together. Then, as the leader, read through the prayer again, this time pausing after each sentence to offer a question to your young people and give them time to reflect. It may help to play some quiet reflection music (such as [this](#)) during this time.

Leader read: Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love.

- Am I aware of the need for the Holy Spirit in my life? How can I open my heart to make room for the Holy Spirit?

Leader read: Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth.

- Am I ready to invite the Holy Spirit in, knowing it will change me? How can I have courage to accept the newness that the Holy Spirit brings into my life and share it with others?

Leader read: O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations.

- Am I open to listen to what God might be asking of me? How can I be ready to discern where the Holy Spirit is inspiring me to go?

Leader read: Through Christ Our Lord, Amen.

- As we end this prayer asking the Holy Spirit to come into our hearts, take the time to offer a prayer intention to God for your time at Holy Fire.

Take Time for Personal Reflection

Invite your young people to keep a journal throughout their Holy Fire experience. Start by giving them some time to quietly reflect on the following questions in their journal before Holy Fire. It may help to play some quiet reflection music (such as [this](#)) during this period of journaling.

- How are you feeling about Holy Fire? Are you excited, tired, uncertain, prayerful, indifferent or anxious?
- What is your relationship with Jesus like? What are the best parts about your relationship with Jesus? What are the obstacles or problems that are preventing you from growing your relationship with Jesus?
- Who has inspired you in your faith life? Who do you look to see an example of God's love? Why do they inspire you and how do they show God's love in their life?
- Where is there joy in your life right now? From those places of joy, what do you want to give God thanks for?

Start Faith Conversations with Other Young People

Make time for your young people to start faith conversations with each other before Holy Fire. There will not be faith discussions during Holy Fire itself, so if you want to incorporate this into the Holy Fire experience, it will need to take place before or after the event (or both!). If you decide to incorporate these conversations, we recommend breaking your young people into small groups for these discussions and having an adult volunteer facilitate the conversations of each small group, if you are able.

Have your young people read **this Gospel story**, Matthew 19: 16-30. Then, have them discuss the following questions, which are prompted by Pope Francis' reflection on this Gospel at the youth festival this past year:

- Pope Francis says, "What Jesus proposes is not so much a man deprived of everything, as a man who is free and rich in relationships. If the heart is crowded with goods, the Lord and neighbor become only things among others. Our having too much and wanting too much will suffocate our hearts and make us unhappy and unable to love."
 - What do you think Pope Francis means when he says a heart can be "crowded with goods"? How can possessions crowd our hearts?
 - What possessions or things can sometimes crowd my heart?
 - What can I do to prioritize my relationship with God and others?
- Pope Francis says, "Friends, Jesus says to each one of you too: "Come! Follow me!". Have the courage to live your youth by entrusting yourselves to the Lord and setting out on a journey with him. Let yourself be conquered by his gaze of love that frees us from the seduction of idols, from false riches that promise life but procure death."
 - What does it mean to follow Jesus?
 - When is a time in your life that Jesus invited you to "Come! Follow me!" or to encounter him? Was your heart open to this invitation or did you feel afraid or unsure?
- Pope Francis says, "Do not be afraid to welcome the Word of Christ and to accept his call. Don't be discouraged like the rich young man of the Gospel; instead, fix your gaze on Mary, the great model of the imitation of Christ, and entrust yourselves to her who, with her "here I am", responded unreservedly to the call of the Lord. Her life is a total self-giving, from the moment of the Annunciation to Calvary, where she became our Mother."
 - Where, like Mary, have you said "yes" to God's will in your life? What joy came out of that "yes"?

HOLY FIRE

Holy Fire will run from 9-11:30 a.m. followed by the celebration of Mass. The emcee will lead the participants through the event during the 9-11:30 a.m. timeframe. Then, parishes/schools can choose to participate in the streaming of Mass at 11:30 or participate in a local Mass. While the participants must follow along with the emcee during the 9-11:30 window, outside of this timeframe parishes/schools are welcome to add anything else that they wish to the day, including a lunch element.

Holy Fire will feature a live emcee that leads the participants through each part of the experience. During the event, each parish/school leader will only be responsible for making sure their young people are following along with the emcee's directions but will not need to facilitate any activity or discussion. Please see below for an overview of the different elements of Holy Fire this year. If you would like more information about accompanying your young people through a virtual Holy Fire this year, please join us for the training on Thursday, October 7th from 3 – 4 pm on Engaging Young People in Holy Fire and Other Virtual Events ([register here](#)).

Hosting Holy Fire

In order to host young people for Holy Fire 2021, your parish/school needs:

1. The link to the event (you get this once you register) and an internet connection
 - The platform for the event is a website of a professional production company that has experience running virtual events. It is not a typical platform like Facebook or YouTube, and it does not require you to download or install anything prior to the event.
2. The ability for participants to view/hear the event (e.g.: projector and speakers)
 - When it comes to viewing the event, we encourage parishes/schools to work with what they already have at their disposal. For some this may mean projecting on a smartboard in a classroom, for others it may be using a larger screen.
3. Physical space for their young people to gather
 - The physical gathering space will need to take into account the latest safety guidelines. Currently, this would mean keeping the young people masked and three feet apart. The space you use can be the gym, parish hall, classrooms, or wherever there is enough space to safely have your participants gather.

Joining Another Parish or School Group

When you [register](#) for Holy Fire, you will be asked to indicate whether you can host other groups at your site. You will also be asked if you need to host your own group at another site. Once parishes and schools have filled out these questions on their registration, the Archdiocese can match up those who have expressed need with those that have the capacity to host others. If you have a specific parish or school that you have already discussed partnering with, please email holyfire@archchicago.org to let the Holy Fire team know so we can be sure to match you together. Please keep in mind that if you want to be matched with another parish/school or are willing to host another parish school, it would be helpful if you register by October 1st.

3 Movements

The Holy Fire experience consists of 3 movements, each of which include interactive activities, a message from a keynote speaker, a witness talk, and a musical element. There will be one short break included in between the second and third movement (this break would provide enough time to distribute a snack, if desired, but not enough time to have lunch). These 3 movements should ideally be followed by the celebration of Mass.

- 1. Preparation:** This movement is focused on welcoming the participants, preparing them for the rest of the experience, and asking them to open their hearts up to encounter Christ and one another.
- 2. Proclamation:** This movement is centered on emphasizing that God's love is given specifically to each individual young person and that God's great act of love for us in Jesus was done for each of them personally.
- 3. Profession:** This movement is designed to help the young people recognize that each of them is personally being called to make a commitment to Christ and this call is being extended to them now.

Activities

There will be a few times during the Holy Fire experience where we ask the young people to actively participate. During this time the emcee will provide directions on how to participate in the activity. The young people are expected to follow along with the instructions and participate in these interactive activities. The activities will not require young people to move around the room, but they may be asked to stand and move in their own space. As the leader, please make sure each participant has enough space to stand, is listening to the instructions, and is participating in the activity.

Keynote Speakers

These are the main speakers that share with the youth during Holy Fire. Encourage participants to listen with an open heart and mind as the speakers share examples from their own life and how the message of the Good News is relevant to each and every one of the young people and how they live their life.

Witness Talks

During Holy Fire, there will also be witness talks from local teens. These will be shorter than the talks from the keynote speakers and aimed at showing a personal example of how another young person has responded to the call to be a missionary disciple. Again, encourage your participants to be active listeners, trying to make connections to their own life.

Mass

We recommend arranging to have a physical Mass onsite at the conclusion of the 3 movements (which ends at 11:30 am). If you are unable to coordinate a physical Mass, then we strongly recommend participating in the virtual Mass included in the Holy Fire event.

Special Circumstances

The Cardinal and Bishops believe that Holy Fire is an important spiritual experience and communal celebration for young people of faith for all Confirmandi within the archdiocese, and as such have decided that all those who are preparing to receive the sacrament of Confirmation must participate in Holy Fire this year. While we recognize that there will be special circumstances that may prevent

individuals from being able to participate in this capacity, youth attending the live virtual experience receive the full experience. In specific cases when individuals are unable to attend in-person on the day of Holy Fire, recorded materials will be made available as an accommodation for those individuals to virtually engage in the Holy Fire experience on their own, after the live event.

PROCESSING

Depending on the time you have with your young people after Holy Fire, you can choose one of the following tracks. The first focuses on debriefing the event and what your young people experienced there. The second works to extend what the participants started during Holy Fire. Again, feel free to use elements from both tracks if you think that would be best for your young people, or to use questions in the discussion section for personal reflection/journaling, or vice versa.

DEBRIEFING

Reflect on Their Holy Fire Experience

Invite your young people to keep a journal throughout their Holy Fire experience. End by giving them some time to quietly reflect on the following questions in their journal after Holy Fire. It may help to play some quiet reflection music (such as **this**) during this period of journaling.

- What will you remember about Holy Fire?
- Is there a speaker you enjoyed listening to or whose stories were relatable to your life? What did you like about them?
- How are you feeling after participating in Holy Fire? Is there a moment during the retreat that stood out to you? Why was that moment memorable?
- Is there an idea from a speaker or experience at Holy Fire that you feel might be calling you to act? How might you put your faith into action?

Invite Jesus to Continue to Be Your Guide

Have your young people participate in a prayer that invites Jesus into their journey of faith. Ask them to think about their Holy Fire experience and then answer the questions below. You can have your young people do this in their Holy Fire Journal or a separate piece of paper. It may help to play some quiet reflection music (such as **this**) during this time of prayer.

- Draw a cross in the center of your paper. Next to each part of the cross, doodle words or images in response to the questions below, expanding out from the cross at the center:
 - *Around the top, or head of the cross:* After Holy Fire, what are words that come to mind when you think about your own life, relationships, or faith?
 - *Around the middle, or heart of the cross:* What is something from Holy Fire that touched your heart?

- *Around the bottom, or feet of the cross:* After participating in Holy Fire, what do you feel called to do? Where is God leading you?

Read through your responses, reflecting on the question below. Offer this reflection to Jesus in prayer.

- As you continue in your faith journey, how will you build your relationship with Jesus in your mind, heart, and actions? How will you live out his call to love others in your life?

Provide Feedback

Have your participants take the survey to share more about their Holy Fire experience to help inform future Holy Fires. The link to the survey will be made available by Holy Fire team closer to the event.

EXPANDING

Focus on Jesus' Presence through Faith Conversations

You can continue to have your young people participate in these faith conversations after Holy Fire as well. For this discussion we recommend breaking your class into small groups. Then have 2-3 people from each group take on pair of questions to discuss. After giving them time to discuss, have them come back to their small group to share highlights from their partner discussion.

Have your young people read **this Scripture** passage on The Road to Emmaus (Luke 24: 13- 35). Then have them discuss the following questions, giving each 2-3 youth one pair of questions:

- Why do the disciples have trouble recognizing Jesus at first?
- Are there areas of your own life where Jesus is present, but you weren't originally looking for him there? In what ways do you recognize Jesus in Scripture, in the Mass, interactions with others, or other areas of your life?
- After the disciples realize they have encountered Jesus, they say their hearts were "burning". What do you think that felt like?
- Have you ever experienced anything like this when you felt your own heart "burning" in the presence of Jesus?
- After the disciples realized they encountered Christ, they set out to announce the Good News that Jesus had been raised from the dead. How do you think their feeling at the end of the passage compare to how they were feeling at the beginning?
- How might you be called to announce this same Good News in your own life?

Have your small groups end their discussion by praying this prayer together:

Lord Jesus Christ,

You give hope to those in despair.

Just as you appeared to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, make your presence known to us.

Make your presence known to us in your Sacred Scripture; set our hearts on fire when we read or listen to your Word.

Make your presence known to us in the Mass; open our eyes that we might see your face in the breaking of the bread.

Make your presence known in to us in our interactions with others, help us to recognize your face in all people.

Give us the courage to share our days with you, so that we may enter more fully into relationship with you.

Give us the courage to share our faith with others, so that others might come to know, love, and serve you as well.

We ask all this in your name, Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen

Put Faith into Action

In order to connect the call to commit to Christ and live as his disciples everyday with your young people's retreat experience, you could encourage them to put their faith into action. This is particularly important for those young people preparing to receive the sacrament of Confirmation. You can make this connection by using one of the suggestions below or coming up with your own response project.

- **Hold a Commitment Session for your young people.** Organize a time where candidates are joined by ministry leaders who each give a presentation about what the ministry that they are a part of does and how newly confirmed members of the church could get involved. This makes the opportunities concrete and real for the candidates and shows personal involvement from adult ministry leaders throughout the parish. Allow time for the young people to ask questions of these ministry leaders and then have young people sign up to commit to participate in the parish ministry (or ministries) that most interests them.
- **Participate in local Missionary Service.** Take this opportunity to connect this call to go out and share the Good News of God's love for us to participating in missionary service. This service can take many forms, and depending on the safety guidelines in place, creative solutions may have to be used. A couple examples are partnering with the parish to be pen pals with elderly parishioners or starting a neighborhood drive to collect and then donate cold weather items.
- **Participate in the Universal Church.** Use the Catholic Relief Services Toolkit to engage young people in Catholic Relief Services' mission to end global suffering through one of their campaigns. Found [here](#), the toolkit had resource to educate and raise awareness, take action and mobilize, and integrate their campaigns into your program.
- **Start an Acts of Love Cycle.** Find a space where your young people can share their ideas for different acts of love that they could do. This could be a physical space in a classroom, such as notecards on a bulletin board, or a virtual space, such as using survey to create a word cloud of responses. Then, your young people could select different acts of love to put into practice and let you know to remove them once they've accomplished them. This can be a continuous process with young people adding and accomplishing acts of love throughout the year.

Share Your Experience with your Family

Encourage parents and guardians of your young people to participate in a family activity after their children have participated in the Holy Fire experience. Call them to take time to read from Scripture together, reflect on how they are called to respond, and put their faith into action as a family.

Read: Read Acts of the Apostles 2:36- 47 together. In **this Scripture** passage, we hear about some of the best parts of belonging to a community of people that believe in Jesus and sharing his love with others.

Reflect: After reading the passage above, answer the following reflection questions together. This can be done over a family dinner, during family prayer time, or whenever fits naturally into your family's routine.

- When is a time in your life when experienced the joy and blessing of belonging to a loving community? Where was it, and what made this community stand out to you? What was your role in this community?
- What can you do to try and contribute to making a loving community in your life today? Give examples of how you could do this in your family, your parish, your school, your work, or any other community that comes up.

Act: Make a plan to contribute to making a loving community as a family. Below are a few examples, but feel free to create your own action plan.

- Make a family goal where each member will show Jesus' love to others in their own community. For example, the goal for everyone could be to help someone with a problem, but how this goal is accomplished might look different for each family member. The adult might take time away from their tasks at work to help a colleague with their project and the child might spend time explaining how to do the homework to a classmate.
- Make a family goal where each member will show Jesus' love to others in a community that they all belong to. For example, select the parish community that your family is a part of and brainstorm ways each family member could show love in that community. Then, next week at Mass, put those plans into action.
- Partner with your parish to see where others in your parish community might be trying to bring Jesus' love to others, such as a homeless shelter or a nursing home. Volunteer as a family to participate in one of these opportunities and bring Jesus' love to people in those communities.