

PAROECIALIS
ECCLESIA
MATISSIMI CORDIS
PARENT HANDBOOK
FOR THE
SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION
2024



SACRED HEART OF JESUS PARISH
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MY CONFIRMAND IS:

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Prayer for Confirmation Candidates

Lord, You send out Your Spirit to touch the hearts of all people, so that they may believe in You and in Jesus whom You sent. Look kindly on all candidates for Confirmation as they listen to Your voice.

Open their hearts to Your Spirit and bring to fulfillment the good work that You have begun in them. As we prepare our children for Confirmation, make each of us an instrument of Your love.

Teach us to appreciate what is holy in others, and to be patient with what we do not understand. Deepen our faith in the Gospel and help us to pass it on by our example.

We pray that You will continue to guide us and sustain us. We ask this through Christ our Lord, amen.

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- Covenant of Formation for Confirmation
- Bishop's Questions
- Sponsor Form
- Bishop's Letter format example

I. PERSONNEL

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Mrs. Kathleen Wachholz, Parish Administrative Assistant

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II. INTRODUCTION

Confirmation marks a very special time in the life our Catholic youth because it is the completion of sacramental initiation in the Church. As parents, however, this does not mean your “*job is done*.” Your example as practicing, faithful Catholics is never without value. There are many people who have returned to the Church after several years because their parents continued to “keep the faith” throughout a lifetime. Confirmation should be viewed just as much as a beginning as a completion. It is the beginning of a life of faith in which the candidate understands and strives to live the obligations and responsibilities of the Catholic faith.

III. CATECHESIS ON THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

1. Practicing the Catholic Faith: A Necessary Prerequisite for Confirmation

The preparation for the reception of Confirmation is somewhat involved and requires effort and dedication to the program. This follows naturally from the seriousness of the Sacraments in the life of a Catholic. All of the Sacraments are meant to join us more closely to Christ and His Church, at different moments and by addressing

different needs. Specifically, Confirmation is a Sacrament meant to more perfectly unite us to Christ by giving us the strength to live the obligations of our Faith. How necessary this is in a world increasingly hostile to religion in general and Catholicism in particular!

Confirmation also carries with it very real responsibilities. The introduction to the Rite of Confirmation describes those who are confirmed as “more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed.” Therefore, preparation is geared to ready the candidate to assume this responsibility as well as giving them an understanding of how the Sacrament enables them to accomplish these same responsibilities.

Confirmation, of its very nature, is not meant to be lived in a vacuum. Basic living out of the Catholic Faith is the only foundation upon which it can be built. This includes regular attendance at Sunday Mass, frequent recourse to the Sacrament of Penance and a striving to live out the moral teachings of the Church. Without these, Confirmation has no foundation to be built upon, and is therefore pointless.

In our preparation program, we will be looking for this foundation. If at this time you and your family do not participate in the life of the Church regularly, now is a perfect time to renew that living flame. If you do not intend to practice your Catholic Faith, then we at Sacred Heart of Jesus prefer not to engage in a less than genuine pursuit of the Sacrament.

The old maxim “*Prima lex, salus animarum*” (the first law is the salvation of souls) is the maxim around which the very mission of the Parish exists. All who work to teach and form the children of the parish are frequently reminded of this mission. We stand ready to do all we can to assist you in the pursuit of this mission. Always be aware of our prayerful support in this regard. All we ask in return is your honesty and integrity as together as a Church we keep this goal before us!

2. The Candidate

The Church has three general requirements for the candidates, as well as some for sponsors, who present themselves for the reception

of the Sacrament of Confirmation:

a. The candidate must be suitably instructed before and after Confirmation.

Growth within the Church takes into consideration every aspect of the human person. Not the least of these is intellectual formation. An important part of preparation is, therefore, an understanding of the Sacrament of Confirmation and the greater reality in which it exists: The Church itself. The classes for confirmation as well as their relationship to other activities aim at giving the candidate an understanding of the Church and their place within the Church as confirmed Catholics.

b. The candidate must be properly disposed.

Since Confirmation is a sacrament, spiritual preparation is of the utmost importance. The reception of any sacrament is closely tied to the moral life of the person receiving it. Just as we are taught to receive the Eucharist while in a “state of grace,” or without mortal sin, the same holds true for the Sacrament of Confirmation. Furthermore, the action of receiving a sacrament should reflect a commitment on the part of the person to live a Christian life for which the sacraments stand. The program therefore includes spiritual formation. Individually the candidates should be attentive to Mass attendance on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, commitment to a personal prayer life, and frequent recourse to the Sacrament of Penance. The example and assistance of parents in discerning their daughter’s or son’s spiritual disposition is important. The ultimate decision as to the readiness of a candidate for Confirmation lies with the pastor.

c. The candidate must be able to renew his/her Baptismal promises.

Simply put, the candidates should have the maturity and the willingness to live their baptismal commitment at all times. This is as follows:

- † To reject Satan and all the works, and empty promises of Satan.

- † To believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.
- † To believe in Jesus Christ, his only son our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, died and buried, rose from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father.
- † To believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.

(from *The Rite of Baptism for Children*)

3. Confirmation within the Context of Formal Religious Instruction

The Diocese of Allentown requires formal religious instruction in grades 1 through 8 even after Confirmation. The Religious Education Program at Sacred Heart is geared for eight years. Students in the eighth grade Religious Education program at Sacred Heart Parish are to attend classes until the end of the school year in May. Confirmation occurs within the context of classes; it does not mark their conclusion.

4. An excerpt from The Catechism of the Catholic Church

The Sacrament of Confirmation

1285 Baptism, the Eucharist, and the sacrament of Confirmation together constitute the “sacraments of Christian initiation,” whose unity must be safeguarded. It must be explained to the faithful that the reception of the sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace. For “by the sacrament of Confirmation, (the baptized) are more perfectly bound to the Church and are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit. Hence, they are, as true witnesses of Christ, more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed.”

Confirmation in the Economy of Salvation

1286 In the Old Testament the prophets announced that the Spirit of the Lord would rest on the hoped-for Messiah for his saving mission. The descent of the Holy Spirit on Jesus at his baptism by

John was the sign that this was he who was to come, the Messiah, the Son of God. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit; his whole life and his whole mission are carried out in total communion with the Holy Spirit whom the Father gives him “without measure.”

1287 This fullness of the Spirit was not to remain uniquely the Messiah's, but was to be communicated to the whole messianic people. On several occasions Christ promised this outpouring of the Spirit, a promise which he fulfilled first on Easter Sunday and then more strikingly at Pentecost. Filled with the Holy Spirit the apostles began to proclaim “the mighty works of God,” and Peter declared this outpouring of the Spirit to be the sign of the messianic age. Those who believed in the apostolic preaching and were baptized received the gift of the Holy Spirit in their turn.

1288 “From that time on the apostles, in fulfillment of Christ's will, imparted to the newly baptized by the laying on of hands the gift of the Spirit that completes the grace of Baptism. For this reason, in the Letter to the Hebrews the doctrine concerning Baptism and the laying on of hands is listed among the first elements of Christian instruction. The imposition of hands is rightly recognized by the Catholic tradition as the origin of the sacrament of Confirmation, which in a certain way perpetuates the grace of Pentecost in the Church.

1289 Very early, the better to signify the gift of the Holy Spirit, an anointing with perfumed oil (chrism) was added to the laying on of hands. This anointing highlights the name “Christians,” which means “anointed” and derives from that of Christ himself whom God “anointed with the Holy Spirit.” This rite of anointing has continued ever since, in both East and West. For this reason, the Eastern Churches call this sacrament Chrismation, anointing with chrism, or myron which means “chrism”. In the West, Confirmation suggests both the ratification of Baptism, thus completing Christian Initiation, and the strengthening of baptismal grace — both fruits of the Holy Spirit.

IV. BAPTISM AND ITS RECORDS

A Baptismal Certificate is required for each child who is preparing to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. Only an authentic certificate is acceptable. If there is not an authentic certificate on file in the Religious Education Office, please provide one as soon as possible. If your child does not have one on file you will be notified. If your child was baptized at Sacred Heart, you do not need to provide us with a certificate. Simply contact Mrs. Kathleen Wachholz at the parish office to verify. Mrs. Wachholz will notify the DRE.

Please know that being baptized in another Christian faith does not impede your child from the celebration of the Sacraments, but does require that the child be received into full communion with the Catholic Church. For children beyond the second grade this is normally accomplished through the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults). The RCIA begins in September and Confirmation occurs at the Easter Vigil.

About Baptismal Certificates

The official record of any sacrament, which takes place in the Catholic Church, is the Sacramental Register (a large book with all the necessary information) of that sacrament which is kept in the Parish Office. Church law is very clear about how and where these records are to be kept.

A sacramental certificate is a document testifying that this information is present in the Sacramental Register, but is not of itself the official record. The purpose of the certificate is for the communication of this information from one parish to another, and is authenticated by the use of the parish seal. The use of the parish seal is the means by which that information is verified.

When registering for attendance for the Religious Education Program or for one of the sacraments, a baptismal certificate is required. Only an authentic certificate with the parish seal and original signature is acceptable. A photocopy is not an authentic document, and can easily be counterfeited.

A baptismal or other sacramental certificate can easily be

requested from the parish where that sacrament took place. If you would like an authentic certificate for your own records, please request two or more authentic copies of that certificate from the parish of origin.

V. MASS ATTENDANCE

It is a disturbing trend that views the absence of regular Mass attendance as adequate preparation for Confirmation. This is not the mind of the Catholic Church (either recently or in the preceding 20 centuries), nor is it a logical conclusion. The candidate is preparing to have his or her Catholic faith confirmed, therefore an essential component is the participation in the Sunday Celebration of the Holy Eucharist of the Catholic Church. Without this, what exactly is being confirmed?

In previous years, we tried the “honor system.” That is to say, the candidates were trusted to be regular in their obligations as Catholics, and attend Mass every Sunday (or Saturday evening). However, despite good intentions, the effects of Original Sin prevailed, and Mass attendance on the part of the Confirmation candidates was less than exemplary. Therefore, it was found necessary to have some means of keeping an adequate account of how our candidates have kept the obligation imposed upon them by the third commandment.

Each candidate has been given a Mass attendance booklet to be brought to church and signed by the priest after Mass. If the candidate is not home on any Sunday, the obligation to attend Mass still holds. Mass locations and times around the world can be found on the website masstimes.org.

Mass attendance is a serious obligation of every Catholic, young and old. For the good of souls, and to ensure the candidate is properly prepared spiritually, excessive delinquency in Mass attendance may result in a confirmand being deferred to the following year.

VI. THE SPONSOR

Church law requires that a sponsor be a practicing Catholic, i.e., one who attends Mass and receives the Sacraments regularly.

When someone who does not meet that requirement is invited to be a sponsor, it is always an unpleasant (frequently painful) experience for the priest, the parents of the candidate, and most especially for the person designated.

The pastor has a serious responsibility not to admit that person to serve as a sponsor here at Sacred Heart. Nor may the pastor give the person, if a parishioner, a certificate of eligibility to serve as a sponsor at some other Catholic parish.

The reason a sponsor must be a practicing Catholic is that a sponsor is expected to pay special attention to the efforts of the person who is being confirmed to live a Catholic life in keeping with the teachings of the Catholic Church. Sponsors are also expected to assist the parents of the candidate in their Christian duty as parents, by offering them support through good example, encouragement and prayer.

Duties and responsibilities for the sponsor and the sponsor eligibility form are attachments to this handbook. If the person invited to be a sponsor is a parishioner, the pastor must first confirm that he or she is eligible.

Every sponsor must have an eligibility form signed and returned to Sacred Heart on or before **October 28, 2024**.

VII. THE SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS OF THE PROGRAM

1. Discipline

For the students in Sacred Heart Religious Education, the disciplinary policy is the same as the one found in the Handbook for the Religious Education Program.

2. Attendance

Attendance is required at all classes. Commitment to the

formation program for Confirmation should be taken seriously. Therefore, absence from classes due to sporting events, parties, etc., will be considered as unexcused absences. Unexcused absences will be taken as an indication that preparation for Confirmation is not being taken seriously and the candidate may be asked to leave the program until the next year.

The work from every class missed must be made up. The student should consult with the teacher for this work.

If for some serious reason a candidate cannot attend a class, an email or written note from the parents is required, preferably before the class. After two absences, for any reason, a conference with the Director of Religious Education is required.

3. Covenant of Formation for Confirmation

All candidates for Confirmation preparation are given a form with the Covenant of Formation for Confirmation. This is a promise on the part of the candidate to take seriously the preparation for receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation and to fulfill all the requirements faithfully. Although the parents are an integral part of their child's Confirmation preparation, it is important that the candidate makes a personal commitment to his or her own formation and to living the Catholic Faith. If the child is not willing to make the effort to do this, then serious consideration should be given to deferring the Sacrament until he or she is ready to do so.

The Covenant form is to be signed by the candidate and by a parent and returned to the teacher by **September 16, 2024**.

4. Confirmation Name and Saint Report

It is traditional to take a name at Confirmation. Historically this recalls a time when Baptism and Confirmation were administered together. Thus, keeping one's baptismal name at confirmation is always appropriate.

If however, another name is decided upon (a choice equally appropriate), it must be a saint's name. The choice should reflect admiration of, or devotion to, the particular saint, or some virtue he or she represents. Once a name is chosen, it is not to be changed.

The candidate is to write a report on the saint whose name he or she has chosen. This will be due by **November 4, 2024**. The report should include the life story of the saint, the virtues of the saint and why this saint was chosen. The report is to be at least one page in length and printed in Times New Roman, 12-point font with single line spacing and one-inch page margins. In addition, a cover page with the picture of the saint, the saint's name, and the candidate's name must be attached to the front of the report. Students may use books or internet sources such as <http://saints.sqpn.com/alphabetical-list/> and <http://www.catholic.org/saints/>. The report must be written in the student's own words; copying or paraphrasing other sources is plagiarism and is not acceptable.

5. Bishop's Questions

It is the Bishop's wish that a number of questions about the Sacrament of Confirmation be committed to memory. The Bishop's questions are included in this handbook. The answers to the questions should be memorized word for word. During the ceremony, the Bishop usually asks a number of students to give the answers to some of the questions.

6. Confirmation Interviews and Required Knowledge

During the month of September or October, each candidate will be interviewed by the Pastor or Director of Religious Education. This is to determine whether the student has adequately completed the preparation for Confirmation and has learned the required prayers and questions. In addition to the Bishop's Questions, the student should memorize the following (found in the "Catholic Youth Prayer Book"):

- Our Father
- Hail Mary
- Glory Be
- Apostles' Creed
- Act of Contrition
- Ten Commandments
- Sacraments
- Spiritual Works of Mercy
- Corporal Works of Mercy
- Gifts of the Holy Spirit
- Fruits of the Holy Spirit
- Precepts / Laws / Rules of the Church

7. Letter to the Bishop

The letter to the Bishop is to be given to your teacher no later than **October 14, 2024**. This letter is to be addressed to Bishop Schlert and its main purpose is to state the candidate's desire to be Confirmed. The Bishop does read these letters with great care.

The letter must be in proper "business letter" format. It is to be typed (12 point), with a proper salutation and complimentary closing and be at least a full page in length. The candidate should sign the letter by hand. An example has been attached.

The letter should include answers to some of the following questions:

- Why do you want to be Confirmed?
- How do you practice your faith?
- How have you prepared for Confirmation?
- What will Confirmation do for you?
- Whom did you choose for your patron saint and why?
- Whom did you choose for your sponsor and why?

8. Letter to the Pastor

The letter to the Pastor is to be given to your teacher no later than **October 28, 2024**. This letter is to be addressed to Father Butera and its main purpose is to thank the pastor for allowing the person to be receive the Sacrament of Confirmation and to describe how the person will continue to live out his faith and contribute to the parish life.

9. Rehearsal and Confessions

On **Sunday, November 17, 2024 at 12:30 p.m.**, the rehearsal will be held in the church. Confirmation candidates must attend. Sponsors should attend. If a sponsor is unable to come to the rehearsal, a parent should attend the rehearsal instead, and then convey to the sponsor the information on where to sit and what to do on Confirmation day.

In addition to the plenitude of times already available, a specific time for Confession prior to Confirmation will be scheduled. One must be in the state of grace to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation (and Holy Eucharist) worthily.

VIII. THE CONFIRMATION CEREMONY

The Sacrament of Confirmation will be administered by the Bishop at Sacred Heart of Jesus Church on **Tuesday, November 19, 2024 at 4:30 p.m.** Bishop Schlert will celebrate the Mass of the Holy Spirit, and after the homily, calls the candidates to come forward with their sponsors to receive the sacrament individually.

After the Mass, we plan to have a reception in the auditorium with light refreshments. Families are welcome to meet the Bishop and take photographs.

IX. DRESS CODE

Our world has become more and more casual over the years. Consequently, it has become increasingly important to develop a reverent and appropriate policy with regard to dress and personal appearance issues. We value all efforts to maintain a dignified and respectful atmosphere for the reception of a publicly celebrated sacrament. Being humble temples of God's Spirit can be reflected in what we do. In that light, we institute the following guidelines, remembering always our first need is to be in the state of Grace.

For Confirmation, robes will be used. This does not in any way nullify the dress code. Please read the next page for specific dress code requirements of ladies and gentlemen.

LADIES

1. No unnatural hairstyle or color, makeup, personal adornment (piercing and tattoos), outlandish jewelry or immodest dress will be acceptable. (We reserve the right to such judgment in this and all other areas below.)
2. Dresses of any color are to be worn no shorter than the top of the kneecap; shoulders shall be covered at all times.
3. The neckline is not to be lower than three (3) inches below the base of the neck.
4. Pants suits and/or slacks are not acceptable for receiving a sacrament; sweatpants and sweatshirts are never appropriate.

5. Sensible shoes with heels of appropriate height are to be worn. Sneakers and flip-flops are never appropriate.
6. Makeup and hairstyle shall be “gentle.”
7. Jewelry (necklaces, bracelets) shall be unobtrusive; no dangling earrings are permitted.

GENTLEMEN

1. No unnatural colored hair nor faddish, outlandish style, nor personal adornment (piercing and tattoos), jewelry or outlandish dress will be acceptable. (We reserve the right to such judgment in this and all areas below.)
2. Gentlemen receiving a sacrament will wear dress slacks, dress shirt, business-type necktie (no cartoon characters, nor pictures). A suit or sport coat is suggested but is optional
3. Sensible shoes with soles of appropriate height are to be worn. Sneakers and flip-flops are never appropriate.
4. Blue jeans, sweatpants, and sweatshirts are never appropriate.

Failure to comply with the above will be treated on a case-by-case basis. Our response may include, among other things, the covering of the inappropriate area.





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