

St. Patrick's Parish Confirmation Parent Handbook

2018 - 2019



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Introduction

For the past sixteen years or so, you have watched your child grow from a tiny baby to a young adult. Your love, care and nurturing have been an indispensable part of that growth. You have undertaken the most important job of all - you are a parent.

Through the sacrament of baptism, your child became a member of the Catholic community. As a parent in the Catholic community, you made a commitment to raise your child as a member of the Catholic Church. You have been a teacher, a role model, a source of guidance, and an encouraging influence in your child's faith development.

Your young adult is now being called to reaffirm his or her membership in the Catholic Church through the sacrament of Confirmation. The sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace. Through Confirmation we are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit, *choosing* to unite more firmly to Christ and to the Church.

The History of the Sacrament of Confirmation

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the sacrament of Confirmation has its origin in the apostles' receiving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Just as Jesus had promised, those who believed and who had been baptized received the Holy Spirit. From then on, the apostles and their successors began to lay their hands on the newly baptized in order to "import to them the gift of the Spirit". This laying of the hands is the physical origin of what has become the sacrament of Confirmation. Soon afterward, an anointing with oil (chrism) was added in order to better show the gift of the Holy Spirit.

In the early years, Confirmation and Baptism were a "double sacrament", both being celebrated at one time. As sacraments of initiation into the Catholic Church, Baptism and Confirmation, along with Eucharist, are all very closely related. Baptism is a beginning, an introduction into the Catholic community focusing on Christ. Confirmation is the continuation of one's relationship within the faith community - it focuses on the Holy Spirit.

Interestingly, the order in which we celebrate the three sacraments of initiation - Baptism, Eucharist, and then Confirmation has only been in practice since 1910. Before that, Confirmation came before the Eucharist, as one of Confirmation's stated goals is to develop "a genuine desire to participate in the Eucharist."

What you may remember from your Confirmation experience may be different from the approach to Confirmation today. In the 1950's and earlier there was a "soldier of Christ" mentality, where the newly confirmed received the Holy Spirit in order to defend the faith. Another approach was the idea that Confirmation represented a passing into adulthood, an acceptance of adult responsibilities, with the help of the newly received Holy Spirit. While these two approaches generally represent the experience of those confirmed prior to the mid-80's, Thomas Zanzig describes **the current approach to Confirmation as a "journey of faith within community" where the young person grows in a relationship with the Holy Spirit with the help and support of the parish community.**

With this idea in mind, the St. Patrick's Confirmation process is designed to lead your young adult on that journey of faith, to help in deepening their relationship with God the Father and Jesus through the gift of the Holy Spirit. You, too, must be an active participant in your young adult's journey.

The Confirmation Process at St. Patrick's

Since the choice to be confirmed requires serious reflection and prayer, our preparation process is a very comprehensive one. It is the goal of our process to prepare your young adult spiritually, mentally, and socially to become that full-fledged member of the Catholic Church and St. Patrick's Parish community. To achieve this, the Confirmation process uses four tools:

- 1). ***Preparation classes*** - there will be Sunday preparation classes beginning in October to prepare by examining the many facets of the Catholic faith as well as the sacrament of Confirmation.
- 2). ***Sponsor-Candidate opportunities*** - each Sponsor will be given a Sponsor guide to help them in the journey with their Candidate. The Sponsor, through study, prayer and interaction with the Candidate, assists the Candidate with discernment and preparation. The Sponsor also joins the candidate for a time of reflection and practice prior to Confirmation.
- 3). ***Confirmation retreat*** – an overnight retreat will be held and directed by SPIRITUS at Mt. Tabor.
- 4). ***Community service*** - each candidate will be expected to give service – a minimum of twelve hours - six hours to their Parish and six hours of community service.

The preparation process also includes a Parent and Candidate informational meeting, a Rite of Welcoming ceremony for the Candidates, the Confirmation practice, and the Confirmation ceremony.

A Parent's Role in the Confirmation Process

As a parent, you must play an active role in your young adult's Confirmation process. However, it is also important to remember that Confirmation is a personal choice to be made by your young adult. The sacrament cannot truly be received in its complete form by an unwilling candidate with willing parents. Allow your young adult to make a mature decision and support him/her while in the decision-making process.

Your primary role in the process of Confirmation is to encourage and support your young adult. Pray for him or her and with him or her often. Take an interest in how the process is going. Ask questions and be willing to answer honestly any questions you may be asked. Let your daughter or son know that you are proud that he/she is participating in the process. Be excited - Confirmation is a big moment in your young adult's life.

More specifically, you can help your son or daughter in several ways. First, you may provide some help in choosing a sponsor by suggesting possible people (parents are not eligible). (*Qualified sponsors must be confirmed, practicing Catholics over 18 who are available to fulfill the requirements.*) Godparents, adult friends, teachers, coaches, and other relatives are all likely sponsors.

Also, provide support to your young adult by reminding him/her of all meetings, classes, etc. and arranging transportation. Even these small details can detract from the process if not taken care of. Do not feel inadequate if you don't know everything about the Catholic faith - this can be a great time to grow in your faith along with your son or daughter. And prayer, love, and encouragement are as valuable means of support as knowledge or insight.

Final Thoughts

Undoubtedly, you will have questions, which are not answered in this handbook. It is important that you get answers to these questions so that we avoid any confusion or misunderstandings. Please feel free to call Natalie Carney at 725-8381, ext. 107 or email at ncarney@stpatricksmenasha.org if you have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding all aspects of your young adult's Confirmation experience. I appreciate hearing both positive and negative comments, as they are essential for improving our Confirmation program in the future.

Remember that Confirmation will be an important moment in your young adult's faith journey. Just as you likely have memories of your Confirmation, so will your daughter or son. Make every effort to help make it the best possible experience! Thank you for all your hard work!