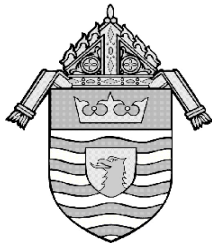
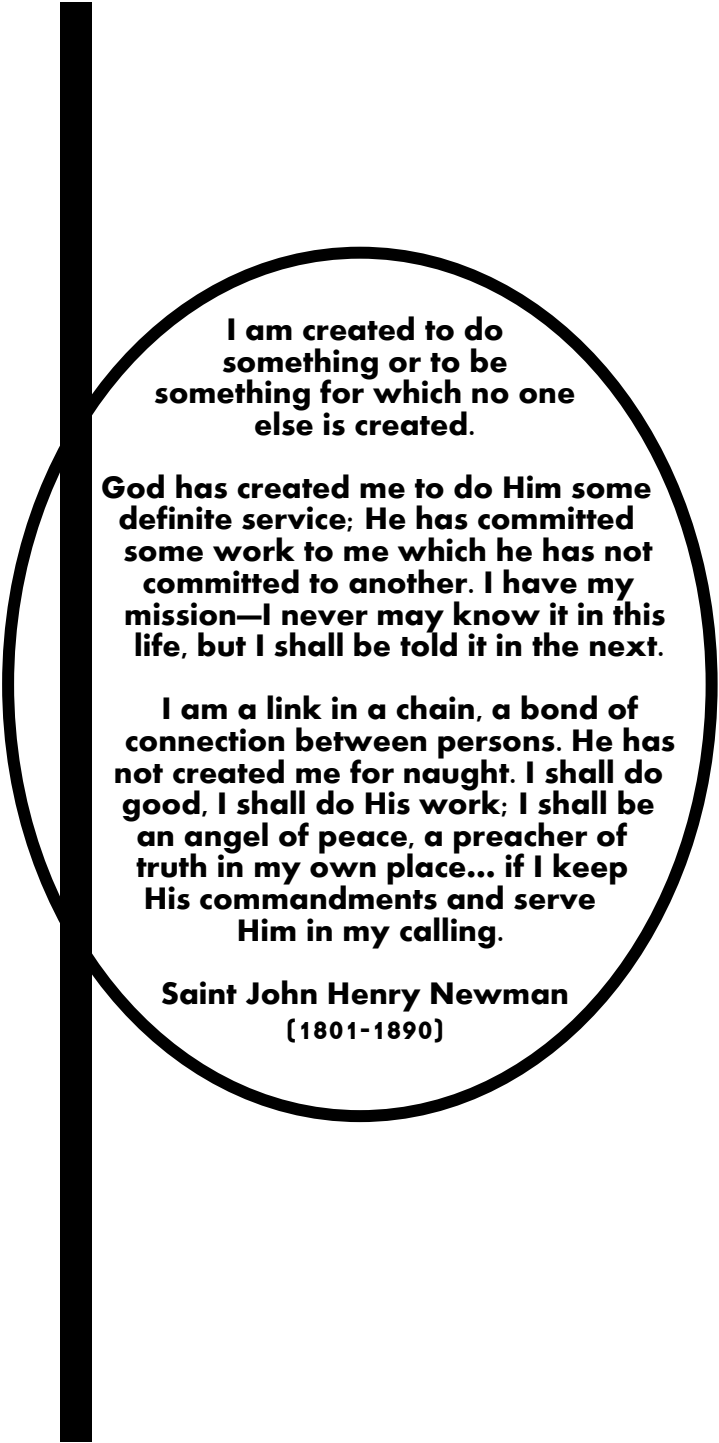


The Red Book of Confirmation

A GUIDE FOR
PARENTS, STUDENTS,
AND SPONSORS



Diocese of Lake Charles



**I am created to do
something or to be
something for which no one
else is created.**

**God has created me to do Him some
definite service; He has committed
some work to me which he has not
committed to another. I have my
mission—I never may know it in this
life, but I shall be told it in the next.**

**I am a link in a chain, a bond of
connection between persons. He has
not created me for naught. I shall do
good, I shall do His work; I shall be
an angel of peace, a preacher of
truth in my own place... if I keep
His commandments and serve
Him in my calling.**

**Saint John Henry Newman
(1801-1890)**

August 1, 2012
Memorial of St. Alphonsus Liguori

Dear Reverend Fathers and Fellow Workers in the Vineyard of the Diocese,

Greetings in the Lord and blessings for your commitment to the New Evangelization!

With this letter, I am introducing the attached booklet for use in the Confirmation preparation program for your parish. The contents are the fruit of valuable prayer, reflection, and collaborative work by the Parish Catechetical Leaders of the Diocese of Lake Charles. What this program proposes is not optional. It sets forth a consistent approach to achieve a specific end, that is the formation of our young people in the faith. It takes the form of directives with the intention of assisting you, your parish catechetical staff, parishioners, and, most importantly, candidates in preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

As a Diocese, we have embraced the call to the New Evangelization. Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that the New Evangelization is “proposing” the Christian faith once again to a world and society that becomes more and more secularized and materialistic with every passing day. We must be clear about what we teach, and this teaching must begin with a personal conversion and a relationship with Jesus Christ.

I wish to thank Father Nathan Long, our Secretary for Christian Formation and Director of Religious Education, his staff, and the many catechists of the Diocese from our parishes that helped compile this program. Their work has made a valuable contribution to our pastoral ministry.

Please read the contents, share them with all your catechists, and help implement this program for the good of the Church and those whom we are ordained to serve.

With prayers for your intentions and the success of our efforts in the New Evangelization, I remain

Sincerely yours in our Lord,

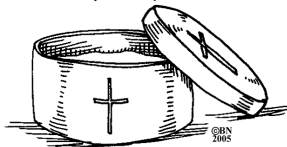


✦Glen John Provost
Bishop of Lake Charles

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*"Be Sealed
with the
Holy Spirit"*



STEPS OF TYPICAL CONFIRMATION PROCESS BY GRADE LEVEL

K-2nd

1. Preparation for and Reception of First Holy Communion

3rd-8th

2. Elementary & Junior High Catechesis and Faith Formation

3. Catholic Basic Knowledge Assessment in 8th grade

4. Attend 8th Grade Retreat

9th-10th

5. **Remote Preparation** through Catechesis and Faith Formation (2 years)

11th

6. **Immediate Preparation** (11th grade)

7. Interview with Pastor and/or Parish Leaders

Confirmation Ceremony

Lifelong

Mystagogy: Deepening in the Mysteries of the faith. The Confirmed Catholic seeks deeper faith, awe, and understanding through prayer, communion, confession, and ongoing learning.

If your child made First Communion, but is entering in outside of this timeline to Sacramental Preparation, please contact your Parish for an individualized plan!

Summary for the Candidate about the Confirmation Year (Immediate Preparation)

As Candidates entering into Immediate Preparation, you will have already passed the Catholic Basic Knowledge Assessment, attended a retreat, and completed two years of remote preparation. Here is a summary of what you will do this year:

- Choose a sponsor and patron saint.
- Attend, with your parents, the informational meetings about the process provided by the parish.
- Attend a Diocesan Confirmation Afternoon of Reflection with your sponsor.
- Attend all Confirmation classes.
- Attend an approved two- to three-day Confirmation Retreat during the period of Immediate Preparation.
- Complete service hours as specified by your program leaders.
- Go to Mass on all Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, and celebrate the Sacrament of Penance regularly. *The Bishop also encourages all Candidates to attend the Easter Triduum.*
- Write a letter to the Bishop requesting the Sacrament of Confirmation. Guidelines for writing these letters can be found in the Appendix at the end of this booklet.
- Interview with the parish priest or his delegate to evaluate your readiness to receive Confirmation. Prepare for this interview with the reflection questions included in the Appendix.
- Attend the Confirmation rehearsal and ceremony.



Choosing a Confirmation Sponsor

Your Confirmation Sponsor is someone who is able and willing to help you in your Christian journey and ensure you fulfill your baptismal promises and the obligations which come with the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Here are a few guidelines for choosing a sponsor:

- Your sponsor cannot be your parent. Church Law states that someone other than a legal parent or guardian be chosen.
- Someone who is able to receive the Sacraments of the Church and has already received the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- Someone who attends Mass on all Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation
- Someone who regularly makes the Sacrament of Penance
- Someone who prays regularly and can help others in developing a life of prayer.
- An adult who can witness to the challenges and graces of life as a Catholic in the world.
- Someone whose family life or day-to-day walk reflects Jesus' self-sacrificing love and His call to take up the Cross daily for love of God.
- Someone who makes a good "advertisement" for the Catholic Church – i.e. someone who joyfully lives the Gospel and whose way of life attracts others to the Catholic faith.

Take time to pray and reflect on the people in your lives who have been witnesses and models of faith. Someone who is already your Godparent could be a good choice for sponsor as well.



For Parents!

Welcome and bless you! What a wonderful gift you present to the Lord as you bring your child to preparation for the completing of the Sacraments of Initiation in Confirmation. While your good work and your child's religious education will continue after this reception of this sacrament, we encourage you to take a moment and savor the journey so far. This is a special time in a particular way for your child, but also for you and the rest of the community who is taking part in helping you raise your family.

From the time your child was born, to the time you sought to have your child baptized as a child of God, and when he/she prepared to encounter the Lord in His mercy through Confession, and in His overwhelming love through the Eucharist. Each of the moments when your child showed a special moment of virtue or grace, when they demonstrated a goodness that could only have come from the Spirit of God dwelling in his/her baptized soul, has borne witness to the goodness of God to you and to your child. Give thanks for all the blessings as we begin this next part of the journey!

The Lord calls parents the "first teachers of the faith" for their children. By seeking your child's baptism and supporting him/her through preparation for First Confession and First Communion, you have already demonstrated your belief in the importance of participation in the sacraments of the Church. As your child enters this preparation for the sacrament of full maturity, it is all the more important for you to witness to the faith as a model. Often, this requires a working knowledge of the faith and a Christian lifestyle. To support you, your church and the diocese offer a variety of Adult Education opportunities, as well as access to the Sacrament of Eucharist and Confession. You may also wish to join your child for classes or other parts of their preparation program.

Sunday worship will be vitally important for you and your family. Whenever you can, try to arrange to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days with your children. Also, encourage your children to receive the Sacrament of Penance regularly. If you have any questions about how to receive the Sacraments yourself, or if you are concerned that you are unable to, please feel free to talk to your local parish leadership or pastor. We are here for you, as well.

After Confirmation, we invite you to help your young person to make a post-Confirmation plan (sample questions for this can be found in the Appendix).

As stated earlier, your child's journey will also be a journey for you. Please review the reflection questions below and complete as your own personal spiritual exercise. You can either journal your answers for your private enrichment, or discuss with a close spiritual friend.

Reflection Questions

1. Who taught you about God and faith? How did that person (those people) help you to learn?
2. What were some of your most significant moments of faith that encouraged growth in your life?
3. How is your faith different now than when you were a teen?
4. What is important to you about being a Christian?
5. Where are you and what are you doing when you feel closest to God (i.e. calmest, most energized, most focused)?
6. In what way or ways would you most enjoy serving God?
7. In what ways have you been able to help your child learn about faith?
8. What factors have made your child's faith life either easier or harder to develop than your own?
9. Why do you want your child to receive Confirmation?
10. How would you define Confirmation?
11. What do you look forward to about the Confirmation process for your child?
12. In addition to yourself, who can you see your child looking to for guidance in the Christian life as he or she continues to grow?

For the Sponsors of Confirmation Candidates

Bless you for making the commitment to sponsor a candidate for Confirmation! The Catholic faith understands that a sponsor is not merely an honor given to a friend or family member of the confirmed. Rather, the sponsor fulfills a sacred duty in the Church of assisting the candidate on the road of Christian life.

Because of this sacred task, candidates are asked to discern carefully whom they will choose as their sponsor. You should know that your candidate has taken this choice seriously, and that in choosing you, this young person sees a true model of faith life in you. Of all the people who might have been considered, you were chosen. Well done, for the considerable faithful impact you are making in the world.

Be sure to schedule specific times to meet with your Confirmation candidate and discuss matters of faith, share your journey, pray together, and grow in relationship. The Christian faith develops by way of relationships. The presence of a sponsor, well-chosen and engaged in the formation program goes a long way to helping the candidate witness their Catholic faith after Confirmation. Sponsors are always welcome and encouraged to attend Confirmation classes, events, service projects, and even Sunday Mass with their candidates.

Sponsors must attend the following events during the Confirmation year:

- Confirmation Afternoon of Reflection sponsored by the Diocese of Lake Charles
- Confirmation Rehearsal
- Confirmation Ceremony

Please refer to the reflection questions offered on page 15 for Parents and Sponsors. Take some time to journal about your own faith experiences. This will help you prepare to be at your best for your Candidate.

Confirmation

A Sacrament for Witness



Prayer to the Holy Spirit



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

V. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created,
R. And you shall renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray.

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.



Understanding the Sacrament

Confirmation is a Sacrament which strengthens a Christian to be a living witness to Christ. The word comes from a Latin expression, *confirmatio*, which means “to strengthen” or “to consolidate”. In the laying on of hands and anointing with oil, the Lord “confirms,” that is, *fortifies* and reinforces the powerful graces received at Baptism.

A remarkable sequence of events takes place in the New Testament Scriptures that helps to shed light on the newness of the grace received at Confirmation. On the night of the Resurrection, Jesus appears to the twelve apostles and breathes on them, “Peace be with you. Receive the Holy Spirit, whose sins you forgive are forgiven them” (John 20:21-22). Yet, even though they clearly received the Spirit already for the forgiveness of sins, the Lord informs them that there is still more to come: “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my **witnesses**... to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). At this next outpouring of the Spirit, at Pentecost, it would be given precisely for the purpose of witnessing and evangelizing to others. This is exactly what happened – the disciples left the house where they were staying and began to boldly proclaim “the mighty works of God” (Acts 2:11).



The Catholic Church celebrates two installments of the Spirit for the same reason. The first outpouring occurs at Baptism, which makes the recipient a child of God and cleanses of sin. The second occurs at Confirmation and is intended primarily for witnessing the faith. *In the Sacrament of Confirmation, the Church re-lives the event of Pentecost. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church expresses, Confirmation imparts grace for a person to “spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses” (CCC 1303). No longer is the person’s faith merely about a “personal relationship”; a fully initiated Catholic is a public representative of Jesus Christ and the Church.*

The signs used at the Confirmation ceremony also remind us of this truth. The laying on of hands means that a candidate is being *sent forth* in the name of the King, Jesus Christ. In the same way that one would hand-deliver a message by way of an ambassador, so too Christ wishes to use each of us as his “Word-bearer”. The anointing with Chrism oil means the person is *sealed* with a permanent consecration for a sacred duty.

Like the Sacred Vessels used to hold the Lord's Body and Blood at the Mass, so too the Confirmed Catholic is anointed and set apart to carry forth the presence of Christ. In other words, we are called by this Sacrament to live for God's glory and the service of our neighbor.

Understanding Our Responsibility

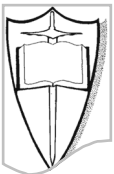
The necessity for this further outpouring of the Spirit through Confirmation has been with the Church since the beginning. *The Acts of the Apostles* records that on one occasion, the apostles discovered a Christian community whose initiation had not been completed. They had only been baptized, and the Holy Spirit "had not yet fallen on any of them." So they sent to them Peter and John, who "went down and prayed for them... laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit." (Acts 8:14-17). Still today, the Bishop, a successor of the twelve apostles, visits the different communities where young Christians have only been baptized, in order to lay hands on them so that they can be sealed with the Holy Spirit as well.

Therefore, receiving Confirmation is essential in order for baptized Catholics to continue their Christian walk. Candidates are encouraged to see sacramental preparation as a springboard to the rest of life, witnessing to faith.

Witnessing in "Word" and in "Deed"

Spreading and defending the faith by "word" implies having a satisfactory knowledge of the Catholic faith. He or she should be prepared to "give an explanation to anyone who asks for a reason for your hope" (1 Peter 3:15). One aspect of Sacramental Preparation for Confirmation will therefore focus on helping the candidate not only to *know* the basics of the faith, but to *defend* and *articulate* them as well.

Spreading the faith by "action" or "deed" refers to the candidate's lifestyle. Successful candidates for Confirmation demonstrate faithful participation in the Sunday Mass and they lead a life that reflects the Church's moral values. For better or for worse, actions speak louder than words. This is especially true when it comes to matters of faith. Therefore, Sacramental Preparation during the High School years will also include components on the *virtues*, the *moral life*, and on *Theology of the Body*. Regular reception of the Sacrament of Penance is also highly encouraged during the preparation period.



Remote and Immediate Preparation:

As the chart on page 3 depicts, for the Diocese of Lake Charles, the High School years serve as the period of Sacramental Preparation for Confirmation. This is divided into two phases, *Remote Preparation* and *Immediate Preparation*.

A.) “Remote Preparation” refers to the formation years prior to the Confirmation year (normally 9th -10th grade). The goal of this period is to bring the student from a basic understanding of the faith to a *mastery* of the Church’s teachings. This mastery also implies strengthening habits of Christian living.

B.) “Immediate Preparation” refers to coursework specific to the Sacrament of Confirmation itself: the Confirmation retreat and other projects and activities during the Confirmation year (normally 11th grade).

In order to enter into Remote Preparation, a candidate must pass an assessment of Catholic Basic Knowledge, typically taken in 8th Grade. He or she is also required to attend an approved retreat prior to beginning Immediate Preparation.

Proper Disposition: As with all the Sacraments of the Church, good preparation is essential. While the faithful have a right to receive the Sacraments of Initiation, Church law also stipulates candidates must be “suitably instructed and properly disposed”. The responsibility for this instruction is shared by many; namely the parents, the pastor, and the sponsor.

Signs that basic formation is present include:

- Regular Attendance at Sunday Mass
- Knowledge of the teachings of the Catholic faith
- Consistent striving to follow the Ten Commandments
- Belief in all that the Church teaches, including but not limited to an understanding of the Eucharist, Confession, Sacramental Marriage, apostolic succession, and every other belief of the Church.

If these are not present, pastors should normally arrange a meeting with the candidate and his or her parents to discuss appropriate remedies prior to entrance into Immediate Sacramental Preparation. **When proper disposition is severely lacking, Immediate Sacramental Preparation for Confirmation is to be delayed to allow for an additional year or more of instruction.**



Appendices

Appendix I

SAMPLE REFLECTION & INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES-IN- PREPARATION

1. Why do you want to receive Confirmation?
2. What is Confirmation?
3. How do you like to pray?
4. What makes you want to have God in your life?
5. Who are the significant people in your life who have taught you about God? What have they taught you that has made the biggest impression?
6. In what way or ways do you most enjoy serving God?
7. In what ways has it been difficult to decide to enter the Confirmation process? In what ways has it been easy?
8. What do you look forward to about the Confirmation process?
9. What is important to you about being a Christian?
10. In what ways do you like to serve others, and why is that important to you?
11. Who will you look to for guidance in the Christian life as you continue to grow?
12. A Confirmation Sponsor is a mature person, other than your parents, who is an actively practicing Catholic, and willing to be your spiritual guide for the Confirmation preparation process. Who is a mature person that you trust to be a strong example of Catholic faith?
13. (Be prepared for various questions on your knowledge of faith fundamentals such as memorization of the Ten Commandments, Beatitudes, and other Catholic prayers and practices.)

Appendix 2

INSTRUCTIONS & GUIDELINES FOR WRITING LETTER TO THE BISHOP

When preparing for Confirmation, it is customary and necessary to write a letter requesting Confirmation. All candidates throughout the world formally request the Sacrament from their Bishop, and so know that you walk in a great tradition as you witness in this way.

The letter should be typed and free of errors. This makes it much easier for the Bishop to understand your thoughts. Please use one-inch margins, double-space, and have main ideas in paragraphs. Include a Salutation: either “Dear Bishop Provost” or “Your Excellency.” The closing should be formal with your signature, in ink, above your typed name. Your letter should not exceed one page in length. You must request to receive Confirmation very explicitly (see example on next page).

Reflecting on the questions below may help you begin an outline.

1. Introduce yourself: Who are you? What are your interests? (Tell him about your family, your school, your interests, and activities.)
2. Talk about your relationship with God (any of the three persons of the Trinity). Talk about the importance of Jesus in your life. How has it grown or changed?
3. List reasons why your Catholic faith is important to you. Talk about the saint you chose to model and why.
4. What is your understanding of Confirmation? How does it personally affect you?
5. Why do you wish to receive Confirmation? Request that you receive the sacrament.
6. What will you do to live as a follower of Christ after Confirmation?

Appendix 2b

SAMPLE LETTER TO THE BISHOP

Dear Bishop Provost,

My name is John Smith. I am a parishioner at Saint Katherine Catholic Church and I attend Saint Katherine's High School, where I play on the Lacrosse team. One of my other hobbies is gaming.

I have prepared for Confirmation this year by going to classes, attending Mass weekly, doing service hours, and attending the retreat. I have chosen Saint Gabriel Possenti for my Confirmation Saint because I wish to become a priest and I have found his life inspiring.

Your Excellency, I respectfully request to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. I remain,

Sincerely yours,

John Smith

John Smith

Appendix 3

WAYS TO BE ACTIVE IN FAITH

1. Attend Mass as often as possible, more than once a week.
2. Join a prayer group or Bible study group
3. START a prayer group or Bible study group....yourself!
4. Contact the Diocese or Parish for information on retreat opportunities
5. See a Spiritual Director regularly
6. Help at Abraham's Tent
7. Help at Catholic Charities
8. Notice neighbors who have a hard time keeping yards up, and offer to help
9. Visit people who are lonely
10. Donate food to Care/Help or Catholic Charities or other organizations
11. Write cards to people on the parish sick list
12. Make time for prayer regularly: reading and meditating on Scripture; praying the rosary; visiting the Blessed Sacrament
13. Become an active helper on an important issue: homelessness, abortion, hunger, joblessness, etc.

Appendix 4

POST-CONFIRMATION PLAN

To be completed by **Confirmand and Parent together**

1. For you, is growing closer to God more like....
 - Checking things off a list
 - Climbing a ladder
 - Tearing down a wall
 - Waiting in Line
 - Preparing for a holiday feast
2. What do you think are the key elements to staying strong in faith throughout life?
3. What is the next important step(s) after Confirmation in continuing to grow closer to God?
4. In Joshua 24, the prophet says, "Do what you will, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." What are the ways in which you stand guard over the faith of your household?
5. By what right do you insist on this for your home and family?
6. Who is going to help you be accountable to developing the faith life of your household?

Conclusion

Jesus said, “I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing!” (Luke 12:49).



Confirmation gives us the grace we need to speak our faith out loud, boldly. It gives us what we need to be unafraid of professing the restorative power of Jesus. Today’s climate calls for Catholics who speak the truth boldly, and to stand for the truth with their lives.

In the early Church, faithful Christians were called *martyrs*. Some were “red martyrs,” dying in defense of the faith. Others were “white martyrs” who did not die for the faith, but nevertheless remained faithful to Christ in spite of great difficulty. All of them played an important part in spreading the Catholic faith.

One important effect of Confirmation is to assist the Christian is to remain faithful even in the face of the Cross. Whether you are a pastor or catechist, a candidate, parent, or sponsor, it is all the more important therefore to prepare well for this important day. May the Lord in His grace strengthen as you embark on your mission!

Notes:

Office of Religious Education
*“Spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ
Through Scripture and Tradition,
Catechesis and Witness”*

2022 Edition