



St. Joseph Parish

&

St. Joseph Middle School

Sacramental Handbook

CONFIRMATION

2021 - 2022

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Introduction

“Sacramental grace” is the grace of the Holy Spirit, given by Christ and proper to each sacrament. The Spirit heals and transforms those who receive Him by conforming them to the Son of God. The fruit of the sacramental life is that the Spirit of adoption makes the faithful partakers in the divine nature by uniting them in a living union with the only Son, the Savior.”

--- *Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1129*

Jesus gave the Church its mission. “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.” (Mt 28:19-20) The local Church and the Domestic Church (your family) have been commissioned to make disciples and spread the Love of God.

To help our children experience and delight in the life of the Trinity (through full and active participation in the Sacraments), it is important that we make every effort to evangelize, catechize and prepare them to receive fruitfully the grace of the Holy Spirit in the Sacraments. The Diocese of Kalamazoo and St. Joseph Parish approach Confirmation Preparation with generous welcome and encouragement intended for all who seek the grace of God with a sincere heart.

“People were bringing little children to him so that he might touch them, and the disciples sternly rebuked them. But when Jesus became aware of this, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the little children come to me; do not hinder them. For it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Amen, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” And he took them up into his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

--- *Mk 10:13 – 16*

God’s Word and Love are seeds that He sows in all of us through His Church.

“And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, “Behold, the sower went out to sow; and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. Others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. And others fell on the good soil and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.”

--- *Mt 13:3-8*

The Church continues to sow the teachings of Christ within her faithful, even as we know the ground is not always fertile. This handbook explains the process set forth by the diocese and parish to assist you, the parents or guardians, who have the task of creating fertile ground for the seeds of faith. We strongly desire, as you do, that all who receive the sacraments are those who have taken the seeds (Christ’s teachings) and are ready to yield the fruit of faith.

What is Confirmation?

The Sacrament of Confirmation was instituted by Christ at Pentecost as a means of delivering the grace of the Holy Spirit to His Body, the Church. We call Pentecost the Birth of the Church, because when the Apostles received the Holy Spirit they began to “. . . make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.” (Mt 28:16-20)

It is one of the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist. Initiation is not graduation. Instead, it begins our relationship with Christ in the Church. By these Sacraments we become part of, united to the Body of Christ, both as the Church and as the Eucharist. This relationship truly begins at our Baptism, when we are washed free from our sins, receive the Holy Spirit, and are marked with an indelible seal that cannot be removed.

Even though we typically, but not always, celebrate Confirmation last, it is the Eucharist that is truly the final step of our initiation. Therefore, to bring us closer to the Eucharist, Confirmation strengthens the graces we receive at Baptism, or as the *Catechism* says, “brings an increase and deepening of baptismal grace” (CCC no. 1303) and brings us closer to Christ. The sacramental grace of Confirmation

- roots us more deeply in the divine filiation which makes us cry, “Abba! Father!”
- unites us more firmly to Christ
- renders our bond with the Church more perfect
- increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit within us
- gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith

“The gift of the fullness of the Holy Spirit that you receive in Confirmation will help you . . . to enter more deeply into a holy communion with Jesus through receiving the Sacrament of His Body and Blood. By participating more fully in the Eucharist, you will – through the power of the Holy Spirit – be progressively transformed into the Body of Christ as a full member of his Church.”

-- Confirmation, RCL Benziger

Profile of a Confirmation Candidate

God created us for one over-arching purpose – to follow Christ so that we may live forever with Him in heaven. Your child is taking a new step in the life-long journey to achieving that God-given purpose. The importance of this step may bring questions to your mind: How do I know that my child is ready to take this step? What if my child isn’t as spiritually far along as other children? To answer those questions, this section describes the profile of the ideal Confirmation candidate, which is based on Canon Law, the direction of Bishop Bradley and the nature of our faith. Our job (yours and the parish’s) is to clear the fertile soil, plant the seeds, water and fertilize. Your child’s job is to be willing and do the work to grow. If we all do our part, then your child will progress towards this ideal at the speed and in the way that God wants.

*To be an ideal Confirmation candidate (called *Confirmand* in the singular and *Confirmandi* in the plural) your child will be striving to trust in God. They frequently receive the Eucharist, while attending Masses on all Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation. They make the effort to be in the state*

of grace having received the sacrament of Reconciliation, and desire to be continually reconciled to God and the Church through this sacrament. They are striving to be intimate with Jesus through their prayer life.

They should be a son or daughter of the Church, the Body of Christ, and look to the saints as inspiration for fulfilling this role. They desire to live as a member of their parish community in such a way that they will strengthen the parish and let the parish strengthen them. They accept and want to fulfill the mission of witnessing in their daily lives the love of Christ and His commands. They will evangelize the world by their actions, choices, and words in order to bring others into the Church and into relationship with Jesus.

Confirmandi will be open to the Holy Spirit, seeking to continually foster the gifts and live the fruits of the Holy Spirit in their daily lives. They will be following Jesus' commandment to "love your neighbor as yourself," responding to God's love by living the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy.

Role of the Parent

Each of the components in this program is intended to bring your child closer to Jesus. It is essential that you, as their parents, understand the logistics of these components so that your child can complete the preparation well. More importantly, however, is for you to understand these because the home is the first church. Families "are 'domestic churches' in which the parents are the first heralds of faith (Second Vatican Council). In the home, father, mother, and children exercise their baptismal priesthood in a privileged way. The home is the first school of the Christian life where all learn love, repeated forgiveness, and prayerful worship."¹

You are the primary teacher of the faith to your child. As Pope Francis says, "It's time for fathers and mothers to . . . reassume their educative role." How you parent them, how you act and how you live out your faith has a much greater impact on their connection to God than what is done in this program. We are here to supplement and support, not replace the Domestic Church that is your family.

Besides living out your faith openly and actively within the family, the best thing you can be doing for your child is taking them to Mass and praying for them. Ask God to bless them. Pray for them to come to know and love God, following His commandments in all that they do. Mass attendance and your prayer for them are so important that they cannot be emphasized enough.

Now that you understand the target for this preparation process and your role in it, the rest of this handbook describes the components of the process. Each of these components is mandatory unless stated otherwise. If there is sufficient reason that one of the scheduled components cannot be completed, then the Confirmation coordinator will prescribe a suitable replacement.

¹ http://www.catholicity.com/catechism/the_domestic_church.html

Time Frame

All those who will be confirmed will enter into a two-year confirmation process within their parish. They are to notify their parish and seek requirements for confirmation at least two years prior to the sacrament. Since Confirmation is usually (though not necessarily) celebrated in the Spring of 8th grade, this means that the parish should be notified before the end of the 6th grade. To be ready to enter the Confirmation preparation process means that they have:

- A desire to be Confirmed
- A desire to learn about their faith
- A desire to live the faith that they learn

Timeline		Gatherings	Confirmand + Parent/Sponsor	
7 th Grade	September			
	October	Parent Meeting MR: The Good News		
	November		Service Project Application	
	December	MR: Baptismal Promises	Baptismal Certificate	
	January	MR: Call & Response	Saint Report 1	
	February	MR: Life of Prayer	Service Project Reflection	
	March	MR: Gift of the Spirit	Saint Report 2 / Interviews with Father	
	April			
	May	End of Year Meeting		

8 th Grade	September	Sponsor Meeting	Sponsor Form	
	October	MR: Evangelization		
	November		Saint Report # 3 / Service Project App	
	December	MR: Martyrdom		
	January	MR: Saints & Service	Saint Selection	
	February	MR: Life of the Spirit	Service Project Reflection	
	March		Interview w/ Father / Bishop Letter	
	April	MR: Apostolic Mission		
	May	Confirmation		

[MR = Micro-Retreat]

Sponsor

“To convert somebody, go and take them by the hand and guide them.”

--St. Thomas Aquinas

“Insofar as possible, there is to be a sponsor for the person to be confirmed; the sponsor is to take care that the confirmed person behaves as a true witness of Christ and faithfully fulfills the obligations inherent in this sacrament.” (Canon Law, #892)

In the Church’s wisdom, our faith journey is meant to have a human spiritual guide. “Every adolescent needs a special adult to talk with, someone other than his or her parents or guardians, someone who won’t judge or worry or repeat later what he or she said. Thinking back on your own youth, you may recall some person who fulfilled this role for you. Something attracts young people to certain adults and enables them to express confidential matters.”²

Canon Law gives us the minimum requirements for a sponsor.

Canon 872: “§2. It is desirable to choose as sponsor the one who undertook the same function in baptism.”

Canon 874: “To be permitted to take on the function of sponsor a person must:

1. *be designated by the one to be [confirmed], . . .*
2. *have completed the sixteenth year of age, . . .*
3. *be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist and who leads a life of faith in keeping with the function to be taken on.*
4. *not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared.*
5. *not be the father or mother of the one to be baptized.”*

We also know that there are other considerations for the ideal sponsor to best guide the Confirmand on their journey. The sponsor will share his or her own faith in order to awaken faith in the Confirmand. They may only be a few steps beyond their Confirmand on the road of experience and wisdom, but their goal is to put their own search for God – with all the moments of pain and joy, despair and hope – at the disposal of those who want to join this search but do not know how.

They will be striving on their own journey to deepen their faith through the Sacraments, prayer and sacrifice. The sponsor does not judge but allows young people to come to their own decisions. They cheer them on with proper doses of encouragement and support. They will discuss with the Confirmand the “whys” of life that young people raise. The ideal sponsor is a *wounded healer*. They give God an opportunity to “heal” others by revealing their own “woundedness.”³

² *When a teen chooses you: practical advice for any adult*, Joseph Moore, Franciscan Media, 2012.

³ Paraphrased from *When a teen chooses you*

It is important for all sponsors to live as an example of the Catholic life for the Confirmand. They must be in good standing with the Church and able to validly receive the Eucharist. An example of when a person is not able to validly receive the Eucharist would be one who has been married outside of the Church.

We recommend that sponsors be chosen and join the journey as early as possible. At the latest, sponsors should be chosen before the beginning of the second year (usually 8th grade) of preparation. There is a form for the sponsor to fill out and have signed by the sponsor's home parish. The form must be returned to the parish by the beginning of the second year of preparation.

Sponsors will take an active role in the preparation of your child for Confirmation. This includes participating in the retreat and micro-retreats, providing accountability and encouragement for the Mass Reflections, and helping with performing and reflecting on the service project. The sponsor should also prepare by being in the state of grace for the sacrament, just like your child.

Entrance Interview (not this year; maybe next year)

A beginner must look on himself as one setting out to make a garden for his Lord's pleasure, on most unfruitful soil which abounds in weeds. His Majesty roots up the weeds and will put in good plants instead. Let us reckon that this is already done when the soul decides to practice prayer and has begun to do so.

-- Saint Teresa of Avila

At the beginning of the two-year Confirmation preparation process, your child will have an entrance interview with the pastor, another priest or their delegate. The purpose of the interview is to take your child's "spiritual temperature." Questions such as the following will be asked: What is your experience with God? What is your prayer life like? Do you attend Mass regularly? Why is it important or not important for you to attend Mass? Why do you want to be confirmed? What saints do you know about? What does prayer look like as a family? What questions do you have about the faith?

The desired effect of the confirmation process is a deeper relationship with Jesus and an understanding of life within the Church and the Holy Spirit's dwelling within the Confirmandi. It is desired that your child is ready to be an intentional disciple⁴, but should at least be seeking to know Christ more and desire to continue to learn and grow toward that relationship. This interview establishes the "baseline" for your child to help gauge their progress towards this deeper relationship.

⁴ **Intentional Disciple:** This is defined as someone who is ready to "drop their nets" as Peter did. In other words, someone who will do anything to place Jesus in the forefront of all they do. They are not only following Christ, but are ready to answer with Peter, "to whom else shall we go" when and if they ever find difficulty with anything Christ or the Church asks of them. See Forming Intentional Disciples by Sherry Weddel for more information.

Mass Attendance

It would be easier for the world to survive without the sun than to do without Holy Mass.

— St. Padre Pio

The Catechism tells us: “The Eucharist is ‘the source and summit of the Christian life.’” In fact, attending Mass is so critical to being Catholic, and the offense we give to God by choosing to miss Sunday Mass is so deadly to our spiritual life, that it is called a mortal sin. St. Alphonsus Ligouri tells us, “One single Mass gives more honor to God than all the penances of the Saints, the labors of the Apostles, the sufferings of the Martyrs and even the burning love of the Blessed Mother of God.” When we attend Mass, we are coming face to face with God in the Blessed Sacrament. When we eat His Body and drink His Blood, we are bringing Him into our lives and becoming united with Him in the most intimate way that our humanity allows.

To help your child become more engaged in the beautiful and holy sacrifice of the Mass, a “Mass Reflection” has been created. This Lectio Divina-style reflection is designed to help your child know the liturgical calendar, listen to the Gospel readings, and understand the main point of the homily. It also engages the child in a dialogue with God, if you will, by asking what they think about the main point of the homily and how they will change their life based on the Gospel. Then they bring the reflection back to Christ when they hold Him in the temple of their body after Communion.

This reflection is to be completed for Mass every Sunday and on Holy Days of Obligation during the school year. If your child does not regularly attend Mass, then the sacrament of Confirmation will be delayed. If your child is in a difficult family situation and cannot attend Mass regularly, please let us know. This situation will be handled pastorally and with discretion.

Reconciliation

He who knows how to forgive prepares for himself many graces from God. As often as I look upon the cross, so often will I forgive with all my heart.

—St. Faustina

Regularly receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation is also an important part of being Catholic. Saints, popes and Bishop Bradley urge us to regularly receive the sacrament every month or two since it benefits us by

- Canceling the guilt and eternal punishment of (mortal sin)
- Giving us a more thorough knowledge of ourselves so that we may love God more deeply
- Stimulating Christian humility
- Helping us to uproot our evil habits
- Strengthening our wills to resist temptation
- Increasing sanctifying grace so that we can become holy as our Father is holy (cf. 1 Peter 1:16)

Because of its importance, we invite your child, yourselves and the sponsors to attend Reconciliation regularly. There cannot be adequate preparation for any sacrament in which the life of Christ and his healing power, through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, is not present.

Confirmandi will be offered the Sacrament of Reconciliation during the retreat and at other times each year. In addition, the Sacrament of Reconciliation will be offered to all Confirmandi, parents, and sponsors after the rehearsal for Confirmation. The Confirmand is strongly encouraged to receive the Sacrament at other times as well.

Retreat (not this year; maybe next year)

In those days [Jesus] departed to the mountain to pray, and he spent the night in prayer to God.

-- Luke 6:12

During the preparation process, your child will attend an overnight retreat at the beginning of each school year. The retreat will give an opportunity for building a more intense relationship with Jesus. Mass, adoration, and the Sacrament of Reconciliation will be offered during the retreat, so that your child will have an opportunity to meet Jesus, especially in His Eucharistic Presence. The children will also be given an invitation to intentionally make a personal decision to follow Christ.

The cost to the family for this retreat is minimal, because the parish pays for most of it. A schedule for the retreat will be distributed at the first parent meeting of the school year. To help you plan, the retreat starts about 6 pm on Friday and ends about 6 pm on Saturday. Please plan for your child to be there the entire time. If a conflict requires that they miss part or all of the retreat, then they must attend a similar retreat at another time. The best option for a Confirmation retreat is the one the diocese puts on about March. Note that the cost of this retreat has been higher. Last year it was \$75.

We ask the parents and sponsors to join us on Saturday afternoon (about 2:15 pm) for the final session, Mass and dinner. The final session will be interactive with adults and children working together and engaged in spiritual conversations. For the 7th graders, we ask at least one parent to come and be involved. For the 8th graders, we ask the sponsor to be there. Parents are very welcome, but just know that it may get crowded.

Evangelization and Catechesis

The spread of the Gospel is not guaranteed either by the number of persons, or by the prestige of the institution, or by the quantity of available resources. What counts is to be permeated by the love of Christ, to let oneself be led by the Holy Spirit and to graft one's own life onto the tree of life, which is the Lord's Cross.

-- Pope Francis

Your child is to be receiving ongoing catechesis via one of three typical means: Catholic school, Parish Religious Education program, or through Catholic Homeschooling. It is best for them to have been receiving ongoing catechesis since first grade. If they have not been in ongoing catechesis prior to registering for the sacrament they must "catch up" before they enter the Confirmation program.

In addition to the normal ongoing catechesis your child receives, the parish will also provide evangelization and catechesis on topics specific to the Sacrament of Confirmation for your child, yourself and their sponsors.

Sacramental catechesis is on-going and focuses on the deeper meaning of the words and actions, emphasizing how the liturgical signs reveal Christ's presence in the Church today. "The sacraments

should be treated within the Paschal Mystery and presented as the means by which we share in the new life of Christ through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Sacraments are not moments in human life of which God becomes a part, but rather the signs and reality of divine life of which we become a part”

*Bishop Robert H. Brom, 8-14-1997*⁵

The topics are presented in the form of micro-retreats, way-stops on the faith journey. They are designed to supplement and support the larger catechesis that is happening in the Domestic Church, in schooling and in full, active participation of the parish life, especially the Sacraments.

The busy-ness of life and the uncertainty of the path makes the typical method of “Here’s a book; go be a sponsor” difficult. The purpose of the format of the micro-retreats is to give you, the parent or sponsor, specific time and structure to walk with your Confirmand on their journey. The micro-retreats are not a class, they are not time for small- or large-group activities. These settings are already happening in the Confirmandi’s life. The micro-retreats are time for you, the parent or sponsor, and the Confirmand to break open the meaning of the Sacrament of Confirmation and, as fellow travelers, grow closer to Jesus.

Your child will need to attend all of these micro-retreats. At least one parent/guardian must attend these micro-retreats as well, so that you and your child might have a common language and you will be able to promote a more vivid faith life at home. Once your child has selected his or her sponsor, they should attend the micro-retreats, if at all possible. The micro-retreats and the “Home Challenges” that follow offer the sponsor opportunities to begin mentoring your child in their faith life.

After each micro-retreat there are Home Challenges. These are 20-to-30-minute discussions between the parent, or sponsor, and the Confirmand that allow what was learned in the micro-retreat to more substantially make an impact on their life.

The Sacramental Catechesis topics follow the two Great Commandments: ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ and ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ (Mt 22:37 – 39) The schedule of topics to be covered is

First Year – Be a friend to Christ Jesus

- **The Good News (Kerygma)**
 - *For God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him, may not perish, but may have life everlasting.* John 3:16
 - Jesus saves us from darkness and gives us our new name, our identity (find more fully in Confirmation) as His friend.

- **Baptismal Promises**

⁵ <https://www.sdcatholicdisciples.net/handbook/chapter-5-liturgy-catechesis-and-sacraments/>

- *Since then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.* Colossians 3:1-2
- We become better friends with Jesus when we reject evil and choose God; Confirmation strengthens us to be virtuous.
- **Call & Response**
 - *God saved us and called us to a life of holiness, not because of our works but according to his own purpose and the grace that has been bestowed upon us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.* 2 Tim 1:9
 - We know how to reject evil and choose God when we listen to Him to hear our mission here, today; Confirmation helps us to hear and choose that mission.
- **Life of Prayer**
 - *And rising very early, going out, [Jesus] went into a desert place: and there he prayed.* Mark 1:35
 - We spend time with our friend in virtuous prayer (individual and in the Mass) and become best friends; Confirmation deepens our prayer.
- **Gift of the Holy Spirit**
 - *But Peter said to them: Do penance and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins: and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.* Acts 2:38
 - God gives us gifts to help us be better friends with Him, to love Him more; in Confirmation He strengthens and enlivens the Gift of the Spirit Who is the Source of all good gifts.

Second Year – Be a better friend to others

- **Evangelization**
 - *Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.’* Mark 1:14-15
 - We introduce our friends to our best friend by being a better friend; Confirmation gives us grace to be a true friend to others.
- **Martyrdom**
 - *For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; for he that shall lose his life for my sake, shall save it.* Luke 9:24
 - We become better friends by putting others first, which may require making sacrifices; Confirmation gives us Courage and Wisdom to do that.
- **Saints & Service**
 - *The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’* Matthew 25:40
 - We will be a better friend when we serve others in their need and look out for their good; Confirmation shows how to serve others well.
- **Life in the Spirit**
 - *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.* Gal 5:22
 - We bring that friend to Jesus by living the Life of the Spirit; Confirmation grows the Fruits of the Spirit in us.
- **Apostolic Mission**

- *Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*
Matthew 28:19
- Confirmation sends us on a mission to spread and defend the faith; We grow in our friendship with Jesus and be better friends to others.

Saints

All the science of the Saints is included in these two things: To do, and to suffer. And whoever had done these two things best, has made himself most saintly.

-- *Saint Francis de Sales*

In order for your child to understand better the Communion of Saints into which they are being confirmed, and in order to build relationships with those close to God, during their two-year process they will research and write about different saints.

It is encouraged in the diocese for those to be confirmed to choose a saint's name for confirmation. Your child may choose the name of one of the saints researched to be their confirmation name, but they don't have to. This practice of choosing a new name coincides with the many people in the scriptures whose names were changed as they took on greater missions for God (Abram and Sarai become Abraham and Sarah; Simon becomes Peter). Your child may choose to keep their baptismal name so long as it does not conflict with Christian nature.

By the Winter class of their second year, your child will submit the name of the saint chosen, the report previously done on that saint and two more paragraphs that explain why they chose the saint. If they chose a saint different from the ones they researched, then they will do a new report.

Works of Mercy Service Project

You know well enough that Our Lord does not look so much at the greatness of our actions, nor even at their difficulty, but at the love with which we do them.

-- *Saint Therese of Lisieux*

An important part of being Catholic is living a life of the works of mercy in loving Christ-like service. Your child will show (or learn) this desire with service hours based on the Corporal Works of Mercy, so that the service will be united with the work of Christ. The desire is that your child comes to see Christ present in these opportunities. The Service Project Reflection sheet helps them to reflect on the works of mercy and Christ's presence in the service. The Corporal Works of Mercy are

To feed the hungry
To give drink to the thirsty
To clothe the naked
To shelter the homeless

To visit the sick
To visit the imprisoned
To bury the dead

Your child will perform at least one service project each year of the process. The parent or sponsor will help them to select, plan, perform and reflect on the project. An application that helps you to solidify these plans will be due before the project begins. Please see Appendix A for some ideas for service projects.

Midway Interview

“If you are what you should be, you will set the whole world ablaze!”

--*St. Catherine of Sienna*

Your child will have an interview midway through the Confirmation preparation process. The interview will be facilitated by the pastor or another priest and may include the confirmation coordinator. The purpose of the interview is to take the “spiritual temperature” of your child after the first year of preparation. Questions such as the following will be asked: How have you been preparing for Confirmation? What saints did you research? Are you going to Mass? What was your Service Project? How much are you learning about your faith?

If your child is not progressing towards a deeper relationship with Jesus and an understanding of life within the Church (as determined by the pastor through the interview and other information available), a special meeting will be called to determine an appropriate course of action.

Baptismal Certificate

“Our hearts were made for You, O Lord, and they are restless until they rest in you.”

--*St. Augustine of Hippo*

A valid baptismal certificate must be presented as part of the confirmation preparation process. If you do not have a copy already, please contact the parish at which your child was baptized and request a copy of this certificate. The certificate is necessary in order to begin the second year (8th grade) of preparation.

Second Year

“Who except God can give you peace? Has the world ever been able to satisfy the heart?”

--*Saint Gerard Majella*

During the second year of preparation (usually 8th grade), your child will continue their preparation according to the components described above: Retreat, Mass attendance and reflections, Reconciliation, Micro-retreats, Saint reports, and Works of Charity and Service.

Letter to the Bishop

“Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the multitude also be; even as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church.”

--*St. Ignatius of Antioch*

As is common in many dioceses, Bishop Bradley requires that your child write a letter to him requesting confirmation. Bishop Bradley is our Shepherd, our leader in matters of faith and morals, and successor of the Apostles. It is he who has the faculty to confirm your child. He received this capability when he was ordained by another

bishop, who received it when he was ordained by a previous bishop, and so on, all the way back almost 2000 years to the Apostles.

In this letter your child will introduce themselves to their Shepherd letting him know who they are, what is important to them, what they have done, and what they will do. This letter will be one of the last things your child does before their Confirmation and once they have completed all of the other steps in the process.

Readiness Interview

"Pray as though everything depended on God. Work as though everything depended on you."

--*St. Augustine*

Your child will have a final interview immediately prior to Confirmation. The interview will be facilitated by the pastor or another priest and may include the Confirmation Coordinator. The purpose of the interview is to evaluate the readiness of your child for Confirmation. Questions such as the following will be asked: What has your experience with God been like during these two years? How has your prayer life changed and grown? How have you opened yourself up more to Jesus in the Mass? How do you prioritize your life so that you can attend Mass? Why do you want to be confirmed? How did you see Christ in your service project? What saint did you choose and why? How important has it been to you to learn about your faith?

As stressed above, the desired effect of the confirmation process is a deeper relationship with Jesus and a greater understanding of and participation in the life of the Church, both through a strengthening of the Holy Spirit's dwelling within the Confirmand. Ideally, your child is an intentional disciple of Christ. However, this gift is given to only a few children at this age. They should at least be seeking to know Christ more and have a strong desire to continue to learn and grow toward that relationship. If they have not reached this threshold of faith (as determined by the pastor through the interview and other information available), Confirmation may be delayed with a plan made for further catechesis based on their individual needs.

Mystagogia

As parents and parish, when we utilize the opportunities to form disciples of our youth during their sacrament preparation, we can expect growth in the life of the Church. We ought to expect and anticipate the growth of faith and increase in desire of your child's faith life within the context of the Parish and prepare accordingly for it. If we are preparing well, your child will want to continue to grow in the love and grace of Christ through and with His Church. There will need to be an intentional effort on all parents and the parish to continue to develop those who have gone through sacramental preparation. Give them opportunities to explore of the mysteries of the faith through deeper catechesis (mystagogia). Beyond that, your child should be encouraged and assisted to engage within the life of the Church. Some ways this could be done include, but are not limited to, continued formal Catechesis of Religious Education, Youth Group, small Christian Communities or other church ministries (e.g., Lector, Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, St. Vincent de Paul, and choir).

Appendix A Works of Mercy Service Project Ideas

FEED THE HUNGRY / GIVE DRINK TO THE THIRSTY

- Organize a group to make sandwiches and hand them out to residents of the Haven of Rest or the Inasmuch House.
- Over a period of a month, pick up leftovers at a local grocery store, bakery or restaurant and deliver them to the Haven of Rest or the Inasmuch House.
- Volunteer at the Food Bank of South Central Michigan, God's Kitchen or St. Phil's Sunday Supper.
- Organize a Catholic Relief Services Food Fast and donate the proceeds to the Food Bank, St. Vincent de Paul or one of the Catholic Relief Services projects.
- Conduct a brown bag food drive in your school or neighborhood and donate the goods to the St. Vincent de Paul society.

CLOTHE THE NAKED

- Host a clothing drive in your school and donate the items.
- Start a group to knit, crochet, or sew baby blankets and donate them to Alternatives Pregnancy Crisis Center or the Inasmuch House.
- Start a group to knit, crochet, or sew scarves, hats and gloves for the Haven of Rest.

SHELTER THE HOMELESS

- Volunteer with Habitat for Humanity or another group that repairs houses (such as CHWC)
- Become a mentor or tutor to a foster child.
- Organize a group to put together care packages for an orphanage.
- Help a family working towards adoption by hosting a fundraiser for them.
- Sponsor a child overseas, writing them letters and sending gifts.

VISIT THE SICK

- Volunteer at a Borgess, Bronson or the VA Hospital.
- Volunteer to help at a nursing home, such as calling Bingo, reading or visiting with residents.
- Organize a birthday card group for members of St. Joseph, St. Philip and/or St. Jerome who are shut-ins.
- Shovel walks and driveways (for free!) for shut-ins or elderly.
- Visit and spend time with a seriously or terminally ill member of your parish.

VISIT THE IMPRISONED

- Organize a fundraiser to donate bibles and/or spiritual reading materials to a prison.
- Under adult supervision, be a pen pal with a prisoner or a teen at a juvenile correction center.

BURY THE DEAD

- Volunteer with a hospice program.
- Help a widow or widower in need with yard work or errands.
- Organize a novena to pray for the dead.
- Donate to ministries that offer free Catholic burials to those who are unable to afford one.
- Pray in the 40 Days for Life at the abortion clinic in Kalamazoo for the lives lost to abortion.