

Congratulations!

You have been chosen to be a Confirmation Sponsor. As a Confirmation sponsor, you have accepted a responsibility of great importance and honor. Your commitment is to walk with the candidate during their preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation. You will be assisting the candidate in being a true witness and disciple of Jesus, and representing the community when you present your candidate to the bishop. Your special role does not end at the Confirmation liturgy; you will help the candidate fulfill their baptismal promises after Confirmation with the help of the Holy Spirit.

This guide strives to help you walk with your candidate in faith, at the same time challenging your own faith.

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8. **Sponsors should expect to:**
* Answer the called to relationship with your candidate, so they know you care and are willing to accompany them on a **life-long** journey of faith
* Be a strong role-model as a faith-filled Catholic
* Be present in the life of the candidate
* Nurture and support the candidate’s faith growth, by sharing your faith that is given freely by God
* Be actively involved in the Confirmation preparation of the candidate through prayer, study, service and discussion.
* Provide periodic updates to Youth Minister on your journey together.
* Engage in discussions about the material being studied including sharing your understanding and perspective
* Encourage your candidate to reflect and thoughtfully consider the decision to receive the sacrament of Confirmation
* Pray for your candidate’s spiritual growth every day
* Worship with your candidate when possible
* Take an active part in the celebration of Confirmation
1. **The sponsor (\*according to Canon Law):**
* A sponsor must be at least sixteen years of age, having completed the sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist), leading a life of faith (canon 874 §1,2 and §1,3) which is in keeping with the teachings of the Catholic Church.
* In order to express more clearly the relationship between Baptism and Confirmation and to make the duty and function of the sponsor more effective, “It is desirable that the godparent at Baptism, if present, also be the sponsor at Confirmation.” (canon 893, §2) This ideal expresses clearly the relationship between Confirmation and Baptism.
* There is to be only one male sponsor or one female sponsor (canon 873).
* Neither the father nor the mother of a confirmand may be a sponsor (canon 874 §1, 5) nor a proxy at the confirmation mass
* Each sponsor is asked to provide a letter of good standing, they should contact their local parish to request one. This is not necessary if sponsor is a registered parishioner of St Francis de Sales and actively practices their faith.
* Should be sufficiently mature in their own faith commitment

**PROXY:** If you are using a proxy sponsor, they must also meet the above criteria.

1. HOW TO SHARE FAITH

Central to being a Confirmation sponsor is sharing with the candidate the “worthy adventure of living a gospel-centered life”. You may not feel equipped for this task, but don’t worry, neither did the first disciples of Jesus! In fact, sharing our faith with each other is not a task, it is a way of life. We carry a particular identity with us, and into all of our environments because we are Catholic. Ask the candidate why they chose you as a sponsor. You may discover that this particular young person has already been reading the Good News through you!

As a sponsor, you are “being church” with a candidate. What does this mean? The mission of church is three-fold.

1. We proclaim the Good News, namely the saving action of Jesus,
2. We offer ourselves as a group of people transformed by the Spirit into a community of faith, hope and love
3. We bring God’s justice and love to others through service

The goals of the church, in its ministry with young people, are “to empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today, to draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the Catholic faith community, and to foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person.”  (Vision of Youth Ministry)

Here are some simple strategies for “being church” with your young person.

1. **Have Faith Conversations: Witness to God’s Presence in Your Life**

Young people, particularly older adolescents, are exploring their beliefs and values. They are searching for a worthy adventure upon which to embark; an adventure that gospel living surely is. Here are some simple strategies that will help you initiate faith conversations:

* Share stories with each other. Stories have a tremendous impact. If all you do as a sponsor is share how God has been moving in and through your life, you have given your candidate a gift of tremendous value. Share with each other the significant religious celebrations of your lives — compare “notes” about First Communion, etc.
* Help the candidate identify what is uniquely Catholic about their life. Share as well significant life experiences in the context of faith.
* Affirm the actions of the candidate which witness to the Good News. Make direct correlation for the candidate between what you see them doing and how it is a value and action of Jesus.
* Break open the Scriptures for the week and share how Jesus’ teachings apply today.
* Help the candidate explore how the events of their life are glimpses of the “vision of the glory of God.”
* Be comfortable with the candidate’s questions and challenges. In order for belief to be meaningful, for God to be meaningful, young people need the space to explore their questions and doubts. They need adults who will stand by them, be faithful to their searching, and not abandon them in their disbelief.
1. **Explore Prayer and Celebration**

Our tradition as Catholics is rich with ritual and celebration of God’s presence and action in humankind. Prayer is relationship with God. Young people are exploring the meaning of Catholic ritual, and discovering their own unique spirituality and personal relationship with God. Walk with them on this adventure!

* Plant a seed somewhere special with the candidate. Talk about how the seed is now underground in the damp and dark preparing to burst forth new life. Relate each step in the plant’s development to the growth of each of us spiritually.
* Challenge yourself and the candidate to move beyond mediocrity in your spiritual lives. Have prayer discussions. Share your own struggles with a prayer life and explore praying together. Help the candidate establish a regular pattern of prayer.
* Invite the candidate to join you at the parish Lenten mission. Take them for ice-cream afterwards and talk about what you heard. Laminate the renewal of baptismal vows as a prayer card or book mark.
* Focus prayer with the candidate on significant events in their life (e.g., driver’s license, death of a friend, finishing the semester).
* Encourage the candidate to write prayers in the form of poems or journal entries. Give them a decorative blank book for this purpose.
* Read Scripture aloud.
* Have the candidate share contemporary music which is meaningful to them. Talk about why.
1. **Explore Justice and Service Opportunities**

Young people have a tremendous capacity for selflessness. In giving themselves through service and concern for others, they discover more about who they are and about the unique gifts that God has given them. Tap into the idealism of your candidate by initiating participation in service opportunities or by expressing interest in what the candidate is already involved. Explore together the needs of the world (individual, parish, community and world) and how the gifts of individuals are meant to meet those needs.

* Decide together on one meaningful service project in which you will both be involved. Find something that calls forth the unique gifts of the candidate. Talk afterwards about how the involvement was a reflection of Jesus’ mission of service.
* Discuss options for further direct service or exploring social justice issues. Assist the candidate in finding information and resources in expressed areas of interest. Visit local service organizations and Youth Ministry opportunities together.
* Search scripture with the candidate and discover Jesus’ teaching on the social issues of his time. Talk about how they relate to the social issues of our time.
1. BUILDING THE RELATIONSHIP ONE-ON-ONE

It is an honor to have been asked to be a Confirmation sponsor. Sometimes the relationship is already solid between Sponsor and Candidate, and sometimes the relationship is just beginning. Regardless, communication skills are foundational at any stage of a relationship. What follows are some thoughts and ideas to assist you develop meaningful and effective communication.

1. **Be committed to communicate with the candidate.**

Your presence and your faith story are gifts you give. The candidate offers you a gift as well, through their self-disclosure. Establish a regular pattern of contact. This could be a once-a-week phone call or a trip to the yogurt shop. First and foremost, the candidate needs to know that you care and that you want to be a part of their life. They also need to know that you take your role as sponsor seriously. This means that you are willing to be present, that sometimes you will go out of your way to be where the candidate is. You are willing to share your stories of life and faith, and to listen to them and help reveal God active in the day to day realities of being a teenager.

1. **Communication is a revealing process.**

As Sponsor and candidate prepare for Confirmation, you will be sharing about yourselves. Your sharing communicates trust in the candidate and a willingness to share your personal vulnerability.

* In your regular contact with the candidate, share your feelings. This can be as simple as telling them how you feel, and relating the various experiences of the day or week and how it has impacted you.
* Express gratitude to the candidate for listening to your story. Let them know that it makes a difference to you that you were able to share. “Thanks for listening. It’s great to be able to talk with you about my day.”
* Be present in an active way to the candidate’s story. This implies that you accept them “as is,” you listen attentively, and you do not pass judgment on what is shared. This means that you “seek first to understand, then to be understood.” Active, communication also implies that you offer suggestions but not advice. Remember, the candidate is sharing who they are with you. You also thank the candidate for sharing with you. It is an honor to enter into life’s story with a youth.
1. FAITH TO FAITH

The key to the Sponsor and Candidate relationship is keeping the conversation going. If the Candidate and Sponsor have an established relationship, start discussing the many topics mentioned in this guide or in the Faith to Faith Magazine. Remember, as a Confirmation Sponsor you will be attesting to the Candidates readiness to be Confirmed.

If you need some guidance in starting faith based discussions, included is a copy of *For Confirmation Sponsors and Candidates, Faith to Faith* by Loyola Press. In the magazine you will find tips for being a great Sponsor, a collection of Catholic Prayers, and six conversations for Sponsors and their Candidates. The six conversations are designed to spark reflection and open sharing around key elements of the Catholic Faith. Each conversation provides background for the sponsor, information in preparing for the Rite of Confirmation, and guided discussion questions to use as a starting point for your conversation.

During the year 2 Confirmation retreat, the Candidates will be given time to reflect on their faith journey over the last two years. It would be helpful if the Sponsor would write a letter to the candidate reflecting on their preparation time together. The letter can also describe how proud you are of the candidate, or any words of encouragement you would like to give.

Letters can be emailed to Diane.Lewis@archbalt.org or if you prefer to keep the feedback/letter private it can be dropped off/mailed to:

St Francis de Sales

1450 Abingdon Road

Abingdon, MD 21009

ATTN: Confirmation – “Candidates Name”

1. READY TO BE CONFIRMED

Sponsors need to encourage their candidate to reflect and thoughtfully consider the decision to receive the sacrament of Confirmation. Minimum readiness to celebrate Confirmation requires that, beside the normal course of Faith Formation (including Catholic schools), a confirmand must participate in the Confirmation preparation program of their parish that includes catechetical, spiritual, family, and service-learning opportunities.

Christ wants you to be confirmed. Through Confirmation, Christ is calling you to be like the Apostles: His witnesses before the community and before the world. To gain a deeper love and appreciation for what it means to be Catholic requires a commitment. It is a process by which a person accepts the responsibilities of their faith commitment and learns what it means to be a disciple of Christ. Candidates who wish to receive the sacrament of Confirmation accept what it means to be confirmed, participate fully in the process, and take seriously what it means to be a member of the Catholic Church.

Confirmation is the beginning of a life long journey of growth, learning, and discovery. Readiness for Confirmation requires the candidate demonstrate a willingness and capacity to continue to grow toward a mature and committed discipleship. The Sponsors task is to help your candidate take the next step in their faith journey, not the final step.

However, no candidate should be coerced into the formation process, as this not only defeats the purpose of the program, but also creates an atmosphere that could negatively affect others. The Candidate must choose Confirmation for themselves, not because all their friends are being confirmed or their parent/sponsor/Youth Minister want them to be confirmed. Ultimately the decision is the Candidates.

1. CONFIRMATION

The Sacrament of Confirmation....

* welcomes us as a sacrament of initiation
* is linked to Baptism and Eucharist.
* is part of our initiation into the faith community.
* welcomes us and deepens our belonging to the faith community
* deepens our relationship to God, as Creator, Redeemer and Spirit
* strengthens us as disciples
* is God’s love expressed as free, undeserved gift
* uses visible signs to communicate invisible love (anointed with Chrism oil and the laying on of hands)
* gives the community the opportunity to witness and celebrate with the candidate.
1. **RITE OF CONFIRMATION**

The rite of Confirmation takes place at Mass “in order that the fundamental connection of this sacrament with all of Christian initiation may stand out in a clearer light. Christian initiation reaches its culmination in the communion of the Body and Blood of Christ. The newly confirmed therefore participate in the Eucharist, which completes their Christian initiation”. The bishop is the ordinary minister of Confirmation.

**Presentation of the Candidates**
After the Gospel the bishop takes his seat. The Pastor presents the candidates for confirmation, according to the custom of the bishop. The candidates will be called as a group or each candidate may be called by name. For either method the candidates will stand in place.

**Homily or Instruction**
The bishop then gives a brief homily. It is not unusual for the Bishop to cite quotes from the candidate’s letters.

**Renewal of Baptismal Promises**
After the homily the candidates stand and the bishop questions them:
Bishop: Do you reject Satan and all his works and all his empty promises?
Candidates: I do.
Bishop: Do you believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth?
Candidates: I do.
Bishop: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, died, and was buried, rose from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father?
Candidates: I do.
Bishop: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who came upon the apostles at Pentecost and today is given to you sacramentally in confirmation?
Candidates: I do.
Bishop: Do you believe in the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?
Candidates: I do.
Bishop: This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it in Christ Jesus our Lord.All present: Amen.

**The Laying On of Hands**
“The laying of hands on the candidates by the bishop represents the biblical gesture by which the gift of the Holy Spirit is invoked”.
Bishop: My dear friends, in baptism God our Father gave the new birth of eternal life to his chosen sons and daughters. Let us pray to our Father that he will pour out the Holy Spirit to strengthen his sons and daughters with his gifts and anoint them to be more like Christ the Son of God.

The bishop lays hands upon the candidates (by extending his hands over them).

The bishop says:
All-powerful God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, by water and the Holy Spirit you freed your sons and daughters from sin and gave them new life. Send your Holy Spirit upon them to be their Helper and Guide. Give them the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of right judgment and courage, the spirit of knowledge and reverence. Fill them with the spirit of wonder and awe in your presence. We ask this through Christ our Lord.
All: Amen.

**The Anointing of Chrism**
“The anointing with chrism and the accompanying words express clearly the effect of the giving of the Holy Spirit. Signed with the perfumed oil, the baptized receive the indelible character, the seal of the Lord, together with the gift of the Holy Spirit that conforms them more closely to Christ and gives them the grace of spreading ‘the sweet odor of Christ’”.

The deacon brings the Chrism to the bishop. The Sponsor places their right hand on the candidate’s right shoulder and presents the candidate to the bishop by stating “Bishop, I present (Confirmation Name).

Bishop: Dips his right thumb in the Chrism and makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of the one to be confirmed, as he says: “(Confirmation Name), be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.”
Newly confirmed: Amen.
Bishop: Peace be with you.
Newly confirmed: And with your spirit.

The bishop will generally congratulate the candidate and shake hands with both the candidate and sponsor.