

Catholic Community of Waukesha Youth Confirmation



Candidate/Sponsor Guide

Dear Sponsor,

Thank you for saying yes. The confirmation preparation process is a time of spiritual transformation for candidates as well as sponsors. In every faith journey, there are questions, doubts, new discoveries, and new or deepened relationships. You have been chosen to help your candidate walk through all of that in order to grow closer to God and to develop a life of discipleship within the Catholic Church. Your support and guidance is truly a blessing!

To help confirmation candidates walk faithfully through the sacramental preparation process, we ask that candidates and sponsors meet at least six times throughout the formation year to engage in faith-based activities and discussions. In addition to these meetings, we encourage sponsors to attend Teaching Mass with their candidates. This year, Teaching Mass will take place on Sunday, February 11 at 2:00 p.m. at St. Mary. Sponsors will be present at the time of confirmation to present their candidate to the Bishop for anointing. Be sure to check with your candidate for specific rehearsal and confirmation Mass dates and times.

To help you as you walk with your candidate, this guide provides an outline for six meetings. Each meeting is an opportunity for discussion as well as exploration of faith and spirituality. Read through this guide carefully. Plan with your candidate to determine the best times to meet for each session. This guide is meant to assist you in your journey. The personal touch you add to each session will have a deeper and longer lasting impact than any scripted material ever could. You know your candidate; tailor your discussion to fit his/her needs. Choose prayers and experiences that will have meaning for your candidate. Be open to the work of the Holy Spirit in this process.

In addition to these candidate and sponsor conversations, you are encouraged to take an active role in your candidate's preparation journey. Some ways that you can show your support for your candidate include attending Mass together, doing service projects with your candidate, and helping him/her choose a Confirmation name. Above all else, be sure that you are praying for your candidate during his/her Confirmation journey.

Here are a few suggestions to help maximize your time with your candidate and foster a fruitful meeting:

1. Pray. Ask for the Holy Spirit to help you find the right words and to open your candidate's ears and heart to receive those words. Begin and end each meeting with prayer.
2. Prepare. Plan your discussion topics. What do you want to ask? What will you share? Sometimes your conversations may not follow your plan (it is God's plan, after all), but having a plan will prevent moments of awkward silence.
3. Calendar in advance. Your candidate is busy. Set the schedule together and help your candidate schedule time for Mass and prayer as well. You can help your candidate learn to prioritize God. Send reminders to your candidate to help avoid last minute cancellations.
4. Evaluate. What went well? Where did you struggle? If you find you need help, reach out to me, a priest or deacon, or someone you trust in your personal faith journey. If you don't know how to answer something, ask! It's ok to tell your candidate you need to do more investigating; it's even better if you can include him/her on your search for answers.
5. Continue. Your time with your candidate is not limited to six meetings nor does it end when he/she receives the sacrament. As you journey with your candidate, you will create a life-long relationship. Continue to pray together, serve together, worship together.

If you ever have questions or concerns, I can be reached at 262-922-9285 ext. 2301 or by email at eerickson@ccwauk.org. Enjoy this journey; being a sponsor will help you grow your own faith and will lead you closer to God. Blessings on your journey, and thank you for your yes.

In Christ,

Erin Erickson
Youth Ministry Coordinator

Prayer for Confirmation

Holy Spirit, strengthen (N) _____ with your gifts of Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety, and Fear of the Lord.

Fill him/her with the joy of your presence. Increase in him/her the fruit of your Spirit. Help him/her to experience and trust your dwelling within, so that he/she can count on your guidance today and always. Show us the way to help one another become better disciples of Jesus Christ, sharing your love with our world and with each person we meet.

Amen.

Meeting 1: Who Am I?

Purpose: To allow the sponsor and the candidate to get to know each other better. Often, this is less about getting know each other personally (you probably already do), and more about sharing faith. Sponsors will share their faith journey and find out where their candidate is on his/her journey. *This session is less about content and more about creating a safe and comfortable relationship with your candidate.*

Resources: Paper, pencils

Meeting Space: Somewhere comfortable and conducive to conversation; coffee shop, restaurant, home. When possible, attend Mass together prior to meeting.

Preparation: Pray and reflect on your own faith journey. When did you first experience God in your life? At what times in your life have you been distant from God and how have you grown closer? Where are you in your faith journey today?

Activity: Mapping Your Journey

- Begin in prayer (spontaneous prayer or use one of your favorite prayers).
- Take time to get to know each other/catch up with each other. Ask questions such as: how is school going? What do you like most/least about school? What are your hopes/dreams/plans for the future? Share your own experiences as well.
- Using the paper and pencils, you and your candidate will each create a map/chart of your faith journey (this can be a drawn picture, list of events, timeline, etc.). Map out your spiritual highs and lows. Consider ways to indicate times you felt close to God and times you felt distant or times when your faith was shaken or confirmed. Indicate the events in your life that correspond marking blessings along the way. Allow time for your candidate to create his/her timeline, but be ready to guide if needed. Once you are finished, share with each other. Listen to the stories your candidate shares and share your own stories. Be authentic and listen while your candidate is sharing. Listen for areas of doubt or concern and make mental note to explore those ideas in later meetings.
- Ask your candidate to share with you what he/she hopes to get out of this journey toward confirmation. Share your own a-ha! moments. Let your candidate know that highs and lows are normal in a faith journey. Share that you are excited to walk this portion of the faith journey together. Make a commitment to pray for each other; schedule time in the week that each of you will set aside for prayer.
- Close with prayer. Thank God for the time you had together. Ask for guidance throughout the rest of your journey and especially for your candidate's journey. Ask your candidate for any intentions and add your own.

Meeting 2: What Do I Believe?

Purpose: To explore the beliefs of the Catholic Church. Together you will explore the Nicene Creed and the Apostle's Creed to discuss our faith. You will explore what's easy to believe and what's challenging to understand. You will explore resources available to help find answers to questions.

This session isn't for you to catechize your candidate; rather, focus on helping your candidate seek answers. This session isn't about condemning doubt, but raising up our questions in order to move ever closer to God.

Resources: Paper, pencils, copy of Nicene Creed, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

Meeting Space: If possible, begin this meeting by attending Mass together. Meet somewhere comfortable and conducive to good discussion.

Preparation: Pray and reflect on the Nicene Creed. Consider what you find easy to believe and what you find challenging to believe. If needed, look through a copy of the Catechism for understanding.

The word creed comes from Latin for "I believe." The Apostles Creed is the faithful summary of the beliefs of the Apostles. It is often called the oldest Catholic catechism. The Nicene Creed has ancient roots as well. It stems from the first two ecumenical councils in 325 A.D. and 381 A.D. Through these councils, we have this statement of faith, the summary of our beliefs.

Activity: The Creeds

- Begin your meeting in prayer using the attached annotated Apostles Creed. Pray this with your candidate with one of you reading the Creed (bold) and the other reading the italics (taken from scripture and other Church documents).
- Ask your candidate to reflect on the Nicene Creed and highlight, circle, or just share out loud the parts of the creed that are easy to understand and to believe. What makes this easy to accept? How do these statements help you to grow closer to God? Be sure to share your thoughts as well.
- Ask your candidate to indicate the parts of the Creed which are challenging to believe. Share your challenges as well. What about these statements make you doubt the faith? Together, discuss those challenging statements. How can you find ways to overcome the doubt that comes from those challenges? Where can you look for answers or further explanation of the Creed? (Catechist, *YouCat*, parish leaders such as priests, Youth Minister, Confirmation Small Group Leaders, Bible).
- Share with your candidates doubts that you have overcome. Reassure your candidate that questions are good when we use those questions to deepen our faith. God gave us the ability to ask questions because he wants us to seek him.
- Ask your candidate if there are other parts of the Catholic faith not in the Creed that he/she struggles with or doesn't understand. Then share with your candidate the parts of the Catholic faith that you love, that draw you closer to God. Ask your candidate to share those as well.
- End by praying the Nicene Creed together.

The Annotated Apostle's Creed

I believe

in God, the Father Almighty,
creator of Heaven and Earth;

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen 1:1)

and in Jesus Christ,
his only Son, our Lord,

"I am the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6)

Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,

"Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus." (Luke 1:31)

suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried.

In suffering and death his humanity became the free and perfect instrument of his divine love which desires the salvation of [humanity] (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 609)

He descended into hell. On the third day,
He rose from the dead.

He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the
right hand of God, the Father Almighty;
From thence He shall come to judge the living
and the dead.

On the last day Jesus will say, "Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 678)

I believe in

the Holy Spirit,

"The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon [them], a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the Lord" (Isa 11:2)

the Holy Catholic Church,

"The Church is holy, not because all her members are holy, but rather because God is holy and is at work in her" (Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church, 132)

the communion of saints,

"...we believe that in this communion, the merciful love of God and his saints is always attentive to our prayers" (Paul VI, CPG 30)

the forgiveness of sins,

If we acknowledge our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrongdoing. (1 John 1:9)

the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.

There we hope to enjoy forever the fullness of your glory (Eucharistic Prayer III, Mass for the Deceased)

Amen

Meeting 3: How Am I Jesus?

Purpose: To think about who Jesus was and is and how we can be more like Jesus. The apostles who had the strongest faith and shared that faith with others were those who encountered the risen Jesus. How can we encounter Jesus and how can we share him with others?

Resources: Paper, pencils

Meeting Space: If possible, begin this meeting by attending Mass together. Meet somewhere comfortable and conducive to good discussion.

Preparation: Most people have learned a lot about Jesus. We hear his story at Mass and celebrate his birth, death, and resurrection regularly. Jesus is the Son of God, he was teacher, healer, miracle worker, friend, leader, savior. Jesus was fully human and fully divine. He is never one without the other, and so learning about Jesus helps us to learn more about God and how to live the best human life. We need to move from what we know to how we live.

Activity: Who is Jesus?

- Begin in prayer; ask Jesus to open your hearts and your minds to know and love him more.
- Use the following question to open your discussion: If you could go back in time to be with Jesus, which Gospel scene would you most like to witness? Why? How do you think you would feel during that event? What would you tell others about what you witnessed?
- Using your paper and pencils, create a list of Jesus' characteristics. Come up with as many as you can in two minutes, then share your lists. Which characteristics did you come up with that your candidate did not, and which did he/she list that you did not list? Together, discuss which of those characteristics you also have and which do you need more?
- Talk about how you encounter Jesus in your life. Share your experiences with your candidate and then invite him/her to share as well. How can you be Jesus for others? (the next meeting will focus on service, so start to talk about how we are most Christ-like when we serve those in need).
- Discuss what it means/looks like to follow Jesus.
- Close with the Our Father (the prayer that Jesus taught us).

Meeting 4: How Should I Live?

Purpose: In light of our encounters with Jesus Christ, explore how to live a practical life of discipleship.

Resources: Paper, pencils, Bible or Bible App

Meeting Space: Meet somewhere comfortable and conducive to good discussion.

Preparation: Review Catholic Social Teaching, Corporal Works of Mercy, consider how you live out the life of a disciple. What ways do you serve others? How do you serve your liturgical, parish, and greater communities? How can you help your candidate explore his/her gifts in order to better serve others?

Activity: Discipleship Plan

- Begin with prayer. Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-13. Reflect on the reading; ask your candidate to share the word or phrase that stuck out the most; share the word or phrase that struck you and discuss with each other what that word or phrase means to you. How does this reading speak to you and call you to serve others?
- To begin discussion: Imagine that you have one wish to make that is guaranteed to come true, but you must use it for someone else's benefit. What would you wish for and for whom would you wish it?
- Pope John XXIII recommended a method of putting faith into action called See, Judge, Act. Together, create a list of issues that you see in your community or even on a larger scale (be sure to include some local issues that you could tackle). Then, choose an issue together that you could act on; create a list of facts that you know about that issue. What causes it? Which of the seven principles of Catholic Social Teaching speak about this issue? Are there any biblical values or works of mercy that pertain to this issue? Are there any agencies in your area working to better this issue? Then make an action plan. What can you do practically to address this issue? What service can you do together? Choose a service project that you can do with your candidate.
- Discuss your candidate's gifts. Ask him/her what ministry/service has been done already. Is he/she completing service experiences? How is it going? How can you help your candidate find service opportunities not just for this year but for the future? How can he/she be a disciple of Jesus? How is he/she addressing the Corporal Works of Mercy.
- Close with intercessory prayer; include intercessions for those issues you listed during your discussion.

*****Try to steer your candidate toward a service project you can actually do together. Meet with your candidate to do service together as part of this meeting or as an extra meeting. Attending Mass and doing service with your candidate is a great way to live out our faith together.***

Meeting 5: Where Do I Belong?

Purpose: To help your candidate to understand that he/she is being initiated into a community, into the Body of Christ, but also into a faith community, the Catholic Church, as well as a local parish.

Resources: Paper, pencils

Meeting Space: Start by attending Mass together; attend Mass at the candidate's home parish. Then meet somewhere comfortable and conducive to good discussion.

Preparation: What does it mean for you to be part of a community? Make a list of all of the communities to which you belong or have belonged (work, family, church, clubs, sports, etc.). Consider what it means to be part of a group and what it means to be an outcast, to not fit into a group or to be left out of a group.

Throughout our lives, community helps us to recognize who we are, what we believe and value, and where we belong. Have you ever been part of a group that doesn't share your values? How has that felt? Be ready to share some of your answers with your candidate.

Sacraments build up our Catholic community. They make us holy, impart grace, unite and strengthen us. The Eucharist is the heart of our faith. We are not a community because we happen to sit in the same building or happen to volunteer at the same events. We are community because of what happens when we gather; we find our identities as members of the Body of Christ as we share in the Eucharist together. We are united with the communion of saints and the angels.

Activity: Belonging

- Begin in prayer (a Litany might be appropriate here)
- For discussion, ask your candidate: who brings out the best in you? Why? How will/do you bring out the best in others?
- Discuss the importance of belonging to community. Ask your candidate to list all of the communities/groups to which he/she belongs. Then ask your candidate to circle the ones that bring him/her closest to God. Talk about what community is and the importance of choosing good communities. Talk about how it feels to be left out of groups and how it feels to be accepted. How can the Catholic church be welcoming? What does it mean to be a member of the Church?
- Discuss your candidate's choice for a confirmation name. Each candidate will choose a confirmation name, most often the name of a saint who has lived the faith in a way that is inspiring to your candidate. Ask your candidate which name he/she is choosing. Why that name? What is known about that saint? Share your confirmation name with your candidate; how did you choose your confirmation name? What does it mean to be part of the communion of saints? What other saints do you look to for strength, guidance, or help praying?
- End in prayer; invite your candidate to lead a spontaneous prayer.

Meeting 6: How Do I Continue?

Purpose: To discern how the faith can be lived daily; to understand that confirmation is not the end of a journey. To help your candidate (and you) think about your hopes for the continuing growth of faith.

Resources: Paper, pencils, Bible or Bible App, Catechism of the Catholic Church

Meeting Space: Start or end by attending Mass together. Meet somewhere comfortable and conducive to good discussion.

Preparation: Read Romans 8:35-39. Read the Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 1285-1289, 1302-1311. Reflect upon the questions you and your candidate will be discussing. Make a list of at least 4 or 5 things you are thankful for and qualities you have seen during your meetings with your candidate. Confirmation is not the end; it is not graduation from faith formation. It is spiritual strengthening for a life-long journey.

What do you see in the future for your relationship with your candidates? How will you continue to support your candidate as an active member of the body of Christ? What have you gained during this time? For what do you want to thank your candidate? For what do you wish to thank God? Do you have some blessing words to speak in order to send your candidate into the next chapter of his/her faith journey?

Activity: Hope

- Begin with scripture; read Romans 8:35-39. Then read together the Catechism paragraphs you prepared.
- Discuss how being a follower of Christ gives us hope. In your past, what things have kept you from having a better relationship with Jesus Christ? What would your life be like if you hadn't known God or the Church?
- Make a list of some ways your church gives people an opportunity to grow in faith. Put a check mark next to those you have participated in. Have your candidate place a star next to those he/she would like to participate in in the future. Are there any you can do together?
- List some ways you can help other people in the church to grow or experience God's hope for the future. How would this unite you with Christ? Place a star next to the ones your candidate would actually like to do.
- How have you seen growth in your candidate? Ask him/her to share the ways he/she has grown throughout this process. How has your candidate grown in understanding God and the Catholic faith? How have you grown in your understanding through this journey?
- Discuss the hopes you each have for your future; how is faith in God going to be part of that future?
- Share your list of things you are thankful for and affirmations with your candidate.
- Set a date to attend Mass together or to do service together after your candidate is confirmed. Also set a time to do something fun to thank each other for the journey (share a meal, go bowling, watch a sporting event together, etc.)
- Close with a prayer of thanksgiving each including three things which you've gained from this process for which you are grateful.