

CATHOLIC
PARENT
KNOWHOW

HOW TO BE A

Confirmation Sponsor

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Top 5 Ways
to Prepare

YOUR QUESTIONS
ANSWERED

“You will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

— Acts 1:8



Karen Callaway

Dear Confirmation Sponsor,

You have been chosen. Someone thinks you are significant. Someone sees you as a follower of Christ.

Being a confirmation sponsor is not just a one-time thing; it is not just a ceremonial role. It is a significant, critical relationship in the life of this young person.

Candidates for confirmation see you, and all sponsors, as:

A Friend

- Someone with whom they can have an important relationship.
- Someone who will be attentive to them as a person, being interested in their life, school, family, and friends.
- Someone with whom they are comfortable so that they can feel free to discuss their faith, relationship with God, and life in the Church.
- Someone with whom they can share their questions, doubts, and worries.

A Witness

- Someone who has an active faith life, which can be seen in your daily living and church involvement.
- Someone who participates in liturgy regularly and in the sacraments.
- Someone who is working toward the spreading of the Gospel and building of the kingdom of God through a Christ-centered life.

A Guide

- Someone who will walk with them on their faith journey and remain in contact with them as a guide in this community of believers.

You are remarkably significant — to your young person, and to the Church! May God’s generous blessings surround you during this time and in the many years ahead.

Janet Schaeffler, O.P.
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It Is an Ancient Sacramental Role

The role of the confirmation sponsor is rooted in the 2,000-year history of the Church, although it has ebbed and flowed with differing practices of baptism and confirmation. The Second Vatican Council and the renewal of the sacraments have made the role of the sponsor once again a vital part of the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation — and the lives of today's young people.

Sponsors are called to be representatives of the Church. This responsibility has been identified with three roles for sponsors: to bring candidates to celebrate the sacrament, present them to the bishop (or the minister he has delegated) for the anointing, and help them fulfill their baptismal promises.

Your role is a multifaceted, wonderful one. You are a representative of the Church before, during, and after the celebration of the sacrament. For your young person, too, you are a companion, guide, witness, mentor, and coach.



A Short Review of the Sacraments and Confirmation

1. Sacraments are not “things” we get. They are a participation in the very life and work of God and his Church. They empower us to live our lives in a different way. The phrase “getting confirmed” is very passive. In contrast, saying that we are “celebrating the Sacrament of Confirmation” reminds us that we are active participants and that the sacrament is ongoing.

2. The Sacrament of Confirmation is about God (as all sacraments are).

Fundamentally, God confirms. In the Sacrament of Confirmation, God's love for us is renewed: God promises again to be always with us, and God pours out on us the gift of the Holy Spirit.

3. Confirmation is often called the Sacrament of the Holy Spirit.

That is true, but it is not the first time we are receiving the gift of the Spirit. Confirmation strengthens and continues the work of the Spirit in our lives that began at our baptism.

4. “Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit ... and the door which gives access to the other sacraments” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1213). It is the beginning of our initiation into the Church — an initiation that is sealed and nourished by two other sacraments: confirmation and the Eucharist. For this reason, these three sacraments are called the sacraments of initiation.

5. Sacraments do not affect just the candidate; sacraments affect the entire community. That is why you as a sponsor, along with the candidate's whole family, are involved. That is why so many things happen within the parish community. In

effect, the heart of the initiation process is located not in a religious education classroom or

Catholic school but in the life of the total faith community. We grow closer to God together.

When we celebrate this sacrament — any sacrament — we do it as a community. This community celebration reminds us that God loves us, not merely that God loves me. There are no “personal” or “private” sacraments.

The best preparation young people can be given for confirmation is the day-to-day living of the Faith by the adults in the faith community to which they belong. Children grow naturally into full membership in a community where the Faith is really lived. Gradually, in ways that are adapted to their age and maturity, they become incorporated into the adult community's faith life, value system, worship, and ministry.

Christian initiation presupposes the existence of a faith community into which the individual is being initiated. Membership in the Church involves a mutual relationship between the individual and the community. The community plays a vital role in the initiation process. The community commits itself to sustain, encourage, and nurture the spiritual life of candidates, and candidates commit themselves to be full participants in the faith life of the community.



SOME HINTS FOR BEING A

SPONSOR

Sponsors do not have to have degrees in theology; what they do need are their life experiences of knowing and living a Catholic life. When young people have questions, doubts, wonderings, or worries, they want others on the faith journey with them who will listen and share their stories. Often, when young people say, “I don’t believe...” or “I’m not going to go to church anymore,” perhaps what they’re really saying is, “Tell me why you believe,” or “Tell me why you go.”

This journey is a journey together. Faith sharing is a mutual exchange. There are certainly times when sponsors might answer candidates’ questions — but for the most part, the “teaching” is already happening in the candidates’ faith formation sessions at the parish or school. Your role is to accompany them on their journey and share faith together. *Together* is the key. Share your own experiences of God, insights, faith, prayer life, questions, and peace. Ask questions, and be attentive to their lives and all that they share with you. Listen carefully so they feel free to share their experiences, feelings, and questions.

Take time to pray with the young person. For some people, it may seem awkward at first. But prayer together will be an experience that will bring you closer to each other, and to our generous God, as the time goes by. You may use formal, already written prayers that you or your young person finds, or you may pray in your own words. Focus at times on prayers of intercession for needs you are aware of, or express prayers of thanks.

And affirm them, affirm them, affirm them!



TOP FIVE THINGS TO DO AS YOU'RE PREPARING FOR the Celebration of Confirmation

1 In addition to participating in all the events and gatherings that the parish has planned for sponsors and candidates, keep in contact with your candidate regularly (letters, emails, text messages, phone calls, etc.) for the sole purpose of inquiring, "How are things going in your preparation program at the parish? What are you learning (or talking) about? How are the prayer experiences for you? Are you involved in service with the parish, with the other confirmation candidates?"



2 Set a schedule (monthly or whatever works best for you) to go out to lunch or dinner, to be there for your candidate as a listener and traveler on the faith journey. In addition to listening to your candidate's story and what is on his or her mind and heart, engage your candidate in faith conversations, such as the following, with both of you answering the questions:

- When do I feel close to God?
- Why/when do I pray?
- When is it hardest to believe?
- What do I think makes a good Christian?
- What is one thing I find hardest about being a Christian?
- What are my dreams for myself?
- What do I think are God's dreams for me?
- What is my favorite story/person in Scripture? Why?
- How would I describe the Holy Spirit? When have I felt the presence and help of the Holy Spirit in my life?
- In confirmation, the gifts of the Spirit are deepened in us. Is there a gift that I can give the Church? The world? How? Why?

3 Choose one service/outreach opportunity/endeavor that you will be involved in together. It may be a one-time event, or it may be something that you commit yourselves to that lasts awhile. It could be something that the parish is already involved with, in which you join with others in a group effort, or it might be something you research and find on your own.



4 Write a prayer for your candidate, a prayer that you will be praying each day for him or her. Send it to the young person with a note saying that you will be praying it each day (and perhaps specify the time that you will be praying it).



5 Use the list of the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit, included here in this booklet. In your times together — or by email, text messaging, phone calls, or notes — praise your candidate whenever you see him or her living out one of the gifts or fruits that was first received in baptism. Share with your candidate which gift or fruit you need right now and pray to grow in and which one you have experienced recently in your life. Together be on the lookout for news stories illustrating the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Suggested Gifts for Confirmation

Trevor's Confirmation

A Prayer for You

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit,
that my thoughts may be holy.
Act in me, O Holy Spirit,
that my work too may be holy.
Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit,
that I love but what is holy.
Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit,
to defend all that is holy.
Guide me then, O Holy Spirit,
that I always may be holy.
— St. Augustine

A decorative blank book that your candidate can use as a journal — a place for his prayers, feelings, and “God-thoughts.”

2



1

Give your candidate a scrapbook, journal, or blog that you have started, which the young person can add to for years to come. Here's what you can include in it:

- Your reflections and thanks to the candidate for his or her choice of you as sponsor.
- A photo of your candidate.
- Your prayer for him or her.
- Photos of events throughout confirmation preparation: parish prayer times, learning times, or service opportunities the two of you have shared together.
- Things to remember.



3

A new copy of the Bible if the candidate needs one.

4

Religious jewelry or music.



5

A book of saints or biographies of modern-day people who have made a difference for good in our world.

What a Sponsor Can Do Beyond the Celebration of Confirmation — for Years to Come

Remember the candidate's baptism or confirmation anniversary with a special meal, a small gift, or a card with a note saying how you've seen him or her grow, especially in living one of the fruits or gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Invite your candidate to accompany you to various prayer times and religious services within our tradition: Holy Week services, a prayer service, a parish mission, a Thanksgiving ecumenical service, the Stations of the Cross, etc.

Remember things the candidate has told you that are important to him or her: friends, things that are coming up in his or her life (exams, sports events he or she is involved in, school activities), fears or worries. Remember to ask your candidate about them.

As you come across articles, news events, inspiring writings, or thoughts that might be of interest to your young person, email or mail them to him or her.

As you continue your own reaching out in service (helping in soup kitchens, visiting the elderly, taking holy Communion to shut-ins, etc.), invite your candidate to join you, or ask about your candidate's interests in ways to reach out to others.

**The best-selling Prove It! The Catholic Teen Bible and other popular teen resources are available from Our Sunday Visitor. Visit www.osv.com*

A Meditation for Sponsors

**Reflect on Your Own,
and with Your Candidate,
on the Gifts and Fruits of
the Holy Spirit**

A sponsor is:

- One who graciously assumes trustworthiness for walking with another, as together they grow in faith and love of God.
- One who is willing to help in good times and bad.
- One who loves and follows Jesus.
- One who gently listens to and affirms the life story of a growing young person.
- One who shares his or her wisdom, understanding, life experiences, and “God-moments.” One who possesses courage and follows his or her convictions in light of the Gospel.
- One whose life reflects the presence of God.
- One who shares with excitement the challenge of living as Catholics in today’s world.
- One who uniquely uses the gifts of the Holy Spirit to help bring about the kingdom of God.
- One who is willing to live as Jesus lived.
- One who understands what it means to be an active member of the Church, but even more than that...
- One who is a disciple, living as Jesus would live, in every moment, every place, making the world a better place.

The Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Wisdom: The ability to see things from all sides, to get the whole picture.

Understanding: The ability to see from another person’s “heart,” to feel the feelings of others and to put these before our own.

Knowledge: The gift of objectivity, of seeing the world and things around us as they really are, rather than as we would like them to be.

Fortitude (Courage): The ability to follow our convictions and consciences no

matter what the cost.

Counsel (Right Judgment): The ability to make good decisions after looking at the alternatives and considering the consequences.

Piety (Reverence): The ability to treasure life and all that sustains it; a deep respect for what is holy, valuable, and important.

Fear of the Lord (Wonder and Awe): The ability to be amazed by things in life, to be awake to the realization that we are always in God’s presence.

The Twelve Fruits of the Holy Spirit

Kindness: The strength of Christ’s love, which leads us to a greater service to one another.

Joy: The ability to celebrate life, even in the midst of pain and confusion, because of deep, spiritual reservoirs.

Peace: Quiet, inner confidence in God’s care that keeps us from feeling uptight and anxious.

Patience: A staying power that enables us to handle frustration and conflict without becoming unduly edgy or annoyed.

Goodness: A real desire to live a holy life, to set a good example.

Generosity: When we appreciate all that God has given, we naturally feel like sharing with others. Check into local ministries and charities where you both can share your time and talents together for the benefit of others.

Gentleness: An inner strength that permits us to be gentle in our relationships, open, and aware of our own

abilities without having to make a show of them.

Faithfulness: As followers of Jesus, we honor our commitments to God and to others. We can model faithfulness by keeping your promises to family members.

Modesty: When the Spirit of Love fills our lives, we appreciate the dignity of all people and our own dignity, and we no longer need to impress other people with our power, degrees, connections, or wealth.

Self-Control: Learning to be disciplined with our time, energy, and desires in order to reflect our spiritual values and priorities.

Chastity: The ability to form loving and caring friendships, which helps us to act appropriately with our gift of sexuality.

Charity: Quick to sense the needs of the people with whom we work and live and to respond as Jesus would.

A SPONSOR'S PRAYER

Loving, gracious God, send your Holy Spirit upon me.
Make me more aware of the many ways of your presence — the Spirit's gifts within me, around me — continually and constantly.

I thank you that you have chosen me from my birth and that I have been chosen now to sponsor _____.

Bless us on our journey.
Open our ears to always listen; our mouths to always speak our feelings, our reflections; our hands to reach out to others; and our hearts to grow closer to you and all in your family.

Lord, send your Holy Spirit and renew the face of the earth.
Renew my commitment, my openness, so that I may do all you are asking of me.
Amen.

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