



Queen *of the* Apostles

CATHOLIC PARISH
& SCHOOL

TOMAH-WARRENS, WISCONSIN

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION HANDBOOK

2020-2021

OFFICE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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QUEEN OF THE APOSTLES PARISH MISSION STATEMENT

The parish family of Queen of the Apostles in Tomah and Warrens, Wisconsin is a vibrant, faith-filled Catholic community.

As disciples of Christ, we accept our mission to:

- Deepen our personal friendship with Jesus by learning and knowing our faith;
 - Be enriched by participating in the sacraments;
 - Seek and assist those in need;
- Teach the faith to others and lead by personal example;
- Invite and warmly welcome all to the family of God.

We the members of Queen of the Apostles Parish acknowledge the call to teach as Jesus did and commit ourselves to assisting the parish in carrying out the catechetical mission of the Catholic Church. We:

- ❖ believe that growth in our faith begins at an early age and is an ongoing process throughout our lives. In this journey of faith, we share not only the Catholic, Christian story and vision, but also our own personal journey of faith.
- ❖ realize that in order for the faith of the Church to continue to grow, we must treat the instruction of adults as important as the instruction of children.
- ❖ recognize that parents are the primary sources and role models in the faith development of their children. Our role is to assist parents not only in the instruction of their children in the doctrines, tradition and customs of the Catholic Church, but also in forming community and helping them live their faith in Christian service.
- ❖ acknowledge that the parish community as a whole is responsible for promoting the catechetical mission of the Church and for supporting catechists and the Education Committee in their work. Evangelization and conversion require a response from the whole person involving mind, heart and will.
- ❖ accept the challenge of meeting the needs of our youth and adults, taking into consideration their various cultures, social environments, learning style and schedules.
 - Members of the parish Education Committee include Monsignor Kunz, Beth Arity, Patty Bauer, Jon Burbach, Jackie Fitzpatrick, Tom Frei, Mike MacLaren, Deb Pfab.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

The family is the first place a child is catechized and forms his/her vision of God. It is important that parents take an active part in the child's religious training by praying with them at home, teaching them the ways of the Catholic faith, bringing them to Mass, and later, bringing them to the parish for religious education. Parents are the model for the vision of God that children adopt and keep through their lives. If parents teach that God is loving and merciful, the child will learn that mistakes are possible and hold to a healthy vision of God through life. If the family attends Mass regularly, the child sees the importance of continuing it throughout life. The family teaches the importance of having a relationship with God and with the Parish family.

When your child comes to the program, it is the purpose of the Parish to provide a religious education as an extension of what you are teaching the child. We are here to aid you in the process of educating your child in their Catholic faith. We encourage parents to have their children attend classes regularly. Classes for levels K-4 are scheduled on Sunday morning between Masses to accommodate family attendance at Mass. Open communication is the key to a successful program. Please feel free to call anytime to discuss ideas, concerns or difficulties.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION REGISTRATION POLICIES

Registration: Before students can be registered in Queen of the Apostles Religious Education, the student's family should establish parish membership.

Tuition: Yearly tuition for Religious Education is \$70 per child. Additional sacramental fees of \$15 are applied to Level 2 (First Communion) and Level 10 (Confirmation). If you have a financial hardship, please contact the Religious Ed Office. Queen of the Apostles is dedicated to providing the best religious education possible for our parishioners. No registered family will be denied due to a financial hardship.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM POLICIES

Change of Information: If it should happen that your family information changes due to moving, divorce, etc., please contact the office so that we may keep our records up to date.

Emergency Information: Parents should return student registration forms to the R/E office. These forms provide us with the necessary information in case an emergency situation arises. Students should not bring medication of any kind to class. If medications are absolutely needed during class time, they must be brought to the DRE before class with a note from the parent/guardian as to the purpose of the medication, and the time to administer it.

Home study: Some families may choose to home school in the area of religious education. Because there is a particular curriculum being taught at each level, we ask that you contact the R/E office for the materials. A yearly interview with the DRE will determine the child's readiness for the next level.

Field trips: Field trip permission forms are needed to take students off Queen of the Apostles property. Be sure to return the forms promptly if they have been sent home.

Dress code: Students are expected to dress appropriately for class. Students are not to wear clothing with alcohol or drug references, or with questionable messages or pictures. Hats or hoods are not to be worn in the building. Students may go to Mass as part of their class, and they should be dressed appropriately.

Attendance: As you enroll your child in the R/E program, you are making a commitment to the program and to your child. You are accepting the responsibility of making sure your child attends classes regularly and fulfills class requirements. Our program is a continuous process with each year building on previous years. Frequent attendance underscores the importance of learning and growing with their Catholic Family. Since the curriculum is presented in developmental sequence, children may not arbitrarily skip levels. If children register with some or no previous instruction, they may or may not be placed in the same level that they are at in their secular schooling. This matter must be discussed with the DRE and pastor.

- ❖ Please call the RE Office if your child will be absent from class.
- ❖ The expectation is that students have no more than two excused absences per year for illness or family-related events. If the student misses more than the two classes, they will be referred to the DRE or pastor to determine a readiness curriculum to be done in order to be prepared for the following level.
- ❖ If a situation arises in which the parent can see that the student will miss more than the expected amount of classes, the parent should discuss the situation with the DRE to make other arrangements.
- ❖ If for some reason a child needs to be excused early from class, please observe the following: A written note must be turned into the teacher at the beginning of class. The note must contain the reason for dismissal if the child is to be permitted to leave. If more than half of the class period is missed due to the early dismissal, it will be counted as a class absence.

Class cancellations: Due to weather conditions or other unforeseen circumstances, it may become necessary to cancel class. An email will be sent to parents and local radio stations will be notified if classes are cancelled. If the Tomah Area Schools have closed due to inclement weather, our classes won't be held.

Safety concerns: Parents are always welcome to observe their child's class. If a child is injured or sick, parents will be called immediately. **NOTE:** Due to COVID-19 precautions, parents will not be allowed to observe classes until further notice. Parents may contact the DRE with any concerns regarding their child's class.

Class atmosphere and conduct: Most of the catechists are working parents and busy with family responsibilities. They have spent time preparing their classrooms, their lessons, and their hearts. They have also committed additional time to workshops, seminars and meetings in order to provide their class with the best faith-sharing leadership possible. In order to demonstrate support of these dedicated members of our parish, we ask the parents and students to observe the following:

- ❖ Send and pick up child from all sessions on time
- ❖ Participate in classes by volunteering to help the catechist
- ❖ Discuss the day's lessons with your child and continue to develop their faith life

Student responsibilities: In the classroom, students are asked to:

- ❖ Cooperate with the catechist in order to maintain a Christian atmosphere of mutual respect
- ❖ Participate fully and appropriately in your group's activities
- ❖ Treat others and the property of others with respect
- ❖ RESPECT GOD, SELF AND OTHERS

Occasionally there may be situations where disciplinary actions must be taken. Parents will be notified by the DRE, the catechist, or both as to the nature of the disruption. If a continuous or severe disruption takes place, the parents will be called and asked to remove the child from St. Mary's premises. If a child is removed from a class, the responsibility will fall on the parent to complete the course work with the child so that the child may obtain credit for the year. The pastor and DRE will determine if the child will be allowed to be readmitted to the program.

Cell Phone Policy: Students will be asked to turn off all cell phones and electronics at the beginning of class. After this, if a teacher sees a cell phone being used, he/she has the right to take the phone away from the student. In order to regain the phone, the student's parents may be required to pick up the phone from the classroom at the end of class.

Weapons Policy: Queen of the Apostles prohibits students, staff, and visitors from possessing, storing, making, or using a weapon in any setting that is under the control and supervision of the parish.

The term "weapon" means any object which, in the manner in which it is used, is intended to be used, or is represented, is capable of inflicting serious bodily harm or property damage, as well as endangering the health and safety of persons. Weapons include, but are not limited to, firearms (including, but not limited to, firearms as defined in 18 U.S.C. 921(a)(3)), guns of any type, including air and gas-powered guns (whether loaded or unloaded), knives, razors, clubs, electric weapons, metallic knuckles, martial arts weapons, ammunition, and explosives.

Any student who violates this policy will be referred to the student's parents or guardians and to the criminal justice or juvenile delinquency system.

Mandatory Reporting: Wisconsin law [48.981\(2\)](#) requires that any mandated reporter who has reasonable cause to suspect that a child seen by the person in the course of professional duties has been abused or neglected, or who has reason to believe that a child seen by the person in the course of professional duties has been threatened with abuse or neglect and that abuse or neglect of the child will occur, make a report to county CPS or law enforcement.

In addition, Wisconsin law [175.32](#) requires that any mandated reporter who believes in good faith, based on a threat made by an individual seen in the course of professional duties regarding violence in or targeted at a school, that there is a serious and imminent threat to the health or safety of a student or school employee or the public, make a report to law enforcement.

SACRAMENTS

First Reconciliation and First Eucharist: Students prepare for these sacraments in Levels 1 and 2. At the end of Level 2 preparation, the parents, pastor and DRE will determine the readiness of the child using the following criteria:

- ❖ Child must be baptized in the Catholic Church or have made a Profession of Faith
- ❖ Child's baptismal certificate must be on file
- ❖ Regular attendance at weekend Mass
- ❖ An ability to distinguish right from wrong
- ❖ An awareness for the need for forgiveness
- ❖ An ability to articulate one's wrong doings
- ❖ A basic trust in the love and forgiveness of Jesus
- ❖ Knowledge of basic Catholic prayers
- ❖ Active participation in classroom discussion and activities
- ❖ A recognition of Jesus in the Eucharist
- ❖ Knowledge of the Mass

Confirmation: The process of Confirmation begins long before the student comes to the parish for formal religious education classes. The immediate preparation for the sacrament requires the following:

- ❖ Regular attendance at Religious Ed classes prior to Levels 9 and 10
- ❖ Regular attendance at weekend Masses
- ❖ Attendance and active participation in current classes
- ❖ Baptized Catholic or have made a profession of faith
- ❖ Shows signs of a growing relationship with God
- ❖ Is able to articulate the role of the Holy Spirit in their life
- ❖ Attendance at a retreat
- ❖ Student interview with Pastor
- ❖ Recommendation from the Pastor to the Bishop that this person understands and accepts the Sacrament of Confirmation
- ❖ Diocesan guidelines have been met (see attachment from the Diocese of La Crosse)

SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Per the Diocese of La Crosse, our catechists are trained in Safe Environment. This can be reviewed on the Diocese of La Crosse website, or a hard copy will be available in the Religious Education office. We offer Safe Environment instruction to our students as well. This curriculum is provided by the Diocese of La Crosse and can be viewed online. We instruct the children about how to stay safe and healthy because they are God's children. If parents do not want their child to be trained in the Safe environment program, they must complete and return the required form as provided by the Diocese of La Crosse, found at www.dioc.org or attached.

*All who are involved in catechesis seek to provide a safe, healthy place to learn and experience the love of God.
Every child is welcome and important to our parish program.*

We look forward to helping your child grow in his/her faith!

PROMISE TO PROTECT



PLEDGE TO HEAL

BELIEVE IN THE REALITY OF HELP AND HEALING. THERE IS HOPE.

The Diocese of La Crosse is committed to creating a safe environment within the Church and within our society for children and youth. We continue to express a special care for and a commitment to reaching out to the victims of sexual abuse and their families.

To report allegations of sexual abuse of a child by any diocesan agent (bishop, priest, deacon, employee, religious, vendor or volunteer) please fill out the report form found at:

diolc.org/safe-environment/reporting

Alternatively, you can contact:

Mrs. Karen Becker, Complaint Intake Agent at 608.791.0179

Victims of sexual abuse, in addition to contacting civil authorities, are invited to come forward in order to receive pastoral assistance. Such assistance can be received from:

Deacon Tom Skemp, Victim Assistance Coordinator at 608.792.9684



Diocese of La Crosse

Verification of Protect and Heal Training

Family Name: _____

- I acknowledge that I have reviewed the (red book), *On Sexual Misconduct for the Diocese of La Crosse* and (green book), *Child Sexual Abuse Policy and Procedures of the Diocese of La Crosse*, and have also had a chance to view the Protect and Heal Training video on the Diocesan website: diolc.org/safe-environment/library/forms
- I have attended the training held at the school/parish.
- I am unable to complete the training online and am unable to attend the training at the school/parish.

Student Training Declination

The Diocese of La Crosse provides Protect and Heal training from the Catholic perspective to participating individuals in its programs.

The substance and focus of Protect and Heal Training is as follows:

Kindergarten-Second Grade: Students will learn about their **dignity** (their incredible worth) as **children of God** and the respect that each person deserves as a child of God. Students will learn about safety, safe environment and the care that is to surround them, the difference between appropriate, kind actions and behavior that makes them feel safe, secure and loved, and inappropriate, harmful actions and behaviors that makes them feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

Grade Three-Five: Students will learn about the virtue of **respect**, which is based upon the **dignity of each human person**. Students will learn the importance of saying "no" to inappropriate, harmful actions, behavior and touch that makes them feel uncomfortable or unsafe. Children will be encouraged to tell immediately a trusted adult when these situations arise and will learn about the buddy system.

Grades Six-Eight: Students will learn about how each person, including themselves, must be treated with **respect**. Students will learn about, and seek to develop or further develop, the virtue of **prudence**-making good decisions. Students will learn practical tips for keeping themselves safe and will discuss defensive and assertive body language to protect themselves.

High School: Students will understand virtue, which are **good moral habits**, and vice, which are bad moral habits. Students will discuss the virtue of **chastity** and **modesty**; learn practical steps for protecting themselves and others from sexual abuse, including the ability to recognize warning signs and how to react to abuse and to the possible threat of abuse.

- I acknowledge that the Diocese of La Crosse has offered my child Protect and Heal education by the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People and by the Protect and Heal Program of the Diocese of La Crosse.
- I am declining the training and do not want my student(s) to participate in the Protect and Heal Program.

My reasons for opting out are: _____

Parent Name (printed): _____ Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

Children(s) Name(s): _____

School/Parish: _____ System/City: _____

Please return this form to the parish/school office/Safe Environment Office no later than: _____

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PARISH GUIDELINES ON THE RECEPTION OF FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

Holiness is that for which we are made – a total share in the Divine Life.

First Holy Communion is usually received at the age of reason, that is, on or about one's seventh birthday. It is a most joyful and solemn occasion in a Christian disciples' journey to follow the Lord. Given the significance of this moment in the Church which is far greater than a mere private "event", it is important for us to understand what the reception of the Body and the Blood of Jesus in Holy Communion entails and what its implication is. What follows flows from the most serious and sacred obligation of parents to do all in their power to equip their child for eternal life. It is a privilege to procreate new life with God, but it is altogether another thing to be your child's teacher in the ways of faith. Those promises were made at baptism. It is through you as teacher and witness that your child gains access to supernatural life. Certainly it is a privilege and an obligation which bears a weighty responsibility. In Christ and with God's grace this will be a moment of joy as you see God's plan unfold for you and your child.

The gift of Holy Communion must be understood in its correct context. It is one of the three sacraments of initiation into the life of Christ and His Church: Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. The very word "initiation" begs the question: Into what? Baptism grafts us onto the living God and makes us his adopted children. It sets us on the path to holiness and opens before us the gift of eternal life. The baptized, with age and grace, "seek the living God and enter the way of faith and conversion as the Holy Spirit opens their hearts" (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, n. 1). Blessed John Paul II sums it up this way: "Since Baptism is a true entry into the holiness of God through incorporation into Christ and the indwelling of his Spirit, it would be a contradiction to settle for a life of mediocrity, marked by a minimalistic ethic and a shallow religiosity" (Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 31). As parent who presents his or her child for the Sacrament, you are requesting to enter more deeply and consistently into the life of Christ within His Church. This, then, is the significance of "initiation".

Confirmation, the second Sacrament of initiation and normally delayed until the sophomore year of high school, strengthens those gifts of the Holy Spirit given at Baptism. The third sacrament of initiation is the Eucharist. Here, the emphasis must be placed on the fact that the Eucharist is a sacrament of initiation. It continues to do what baptism began: incorporate us into the Body of Christ, both into the life of God Himself and into His mystical body which is the Church, here more narrowly understood to be the Catholic Church. The word "initiation" signifies that the one who receives the Eucharist enters into a reality far greater than oneself. It is not a one-time event, but rather, the opposite is true. The sacrament more deeply immerses one into a life of intense discipleship. With this sacrament comes a sense of belonging to Him, Jesus Christ. This heavenly food changes us into Him. The will of God, as St. Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 4:3 is our sanctification. God's active will for us is to become holy, to be like Him. In the words of St. Athanasius "God become man so that men might become God." In other words, we are to be "divinized". A bold statement to be sure, but it is the ultimate truth to which we are called and is ours by right of baptism.

All this having been said, and in response to the inherent demands of the Most Blessed Sacrament, the following conditions naturally flow from the reality of which we speak. The Solemn reception of First Holy Communion understands that:

1. The child is a baptized Roman Catholic.
2. The child has a moral right to continue to receive the Sacrament, especially in joyful fidelity to God's Third Commandment to keep holy the Lord's Day.
3. The family of the child will actively practice the faith into which the child is more deeply being initiated. At that age, a child depends on adults and yearns to know and love God. This God-given thirst for God must be fostered every way possible.
4. That under the presumption one of the parents is a Roman Catholic, and if the parents are married, they are married validly in the Catholic Church and are therefore able to receive Holy Communion. A valid marriage in the Catholic Church means that the marriage took place before a Catholic priest or deacon in a Catholic church, and if not, then a dispensation was granted by the competent Church authority so that a marriage could take place outside of these conditions. The importance of this is clearly seen: that the faith is practiced in the home without any obstructions and that the parents model well and correctly the receiving of Jesus in Holy Communion in a state of grace.

Likewise, when one deliberately absents him or herself from the Eucharist on the Lord's Day or a Holy Day of Obligation, he or she is not to receive Holy Communion until they have first been reconciled to God and His Church in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

If there are any difficulties in these areas, especially in the area of marriage, they can typically be readily resolved with a generous heart and God's grace. Should there be any concerns or difficulties in this area, please contact the pastor at your earliest convenience.

Holy Communion is extremely important because here we are "dealing with" God Himself, Jesus Christ, truly present in his Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity in the Eucharist. God's will is that we become holy, that we belong to Him and, with integrity, to His Church. We are mindful of St. Paul's admonition that we who eat and drink the Body and the Blood of the Lord must do so worthily, that is, in a state of grace and not being conscious of any mortal sin, lest we eat and drink our own condemnation (1 Corinthians 11:28-32).

May these guidelines open your heart further to receive the gift of truth which will lead you to Him who is Truth. Naturally the greatest desire in your life is to become a saint and to want the same for your child. You do not walk alone. Queen of the Apostles Parish stands ready to assist you in every way she can.

May Mary, Virgin and Mother, lead us to her Son through his Church founded upon the Apostles. Mary Queen of the Apostles and our Queen too, pray for us!

COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

Faith formation is best done in person where interpersonal interaction and discussion enhances and enriches communication. As such, our desire is to offer in-person classes for Religious Education. In order to do this as safely as possible for the students, families, and catechists, we are implementing the following precautions:

- Masks/face coverings are required at all times for students, catechists, and anyone entering the Queen of the Apostles Parish/School Building.
- Students are to be dropped off no earlier than 10 minutes prior to the start of classes (5:50pm for Grades K-5; 6:20pm for Grades 6-10). Students will not be allowed to gather in the building prior to that time.
- Students will be picked up immediately following class (7:00pm for K-5; 7:45 for 6-10). Students will be required to exit the building immediately at the end of class. Parents of younger students may enter the building approximately 5 minutes prior to the end of class to wait for their child.
- Students in Grades K-5 will enter/exit through **Door E** (southwest door off the playground)
Students in Grades 6-8 will enter/exit through **Door C** (south door next to the church/elevator door)
- Upon entering, students are to go directly to their assigned classroom. Parents of younger students may escort their child to the classroom if desired.
- Seating in classrooms will be spread out as much as possible in the classrooms to allow for physical distancing.
- Parents will not send their child/ren to class if they are ill. In the case of an absence due to illness, please contact the DRE.

HOME STUDY/VIRTUAL LEARNING

We understand that parents may have concerns about sending their child/ren to in-person classes. As the primary teachers of the faith, we honor the decision some may make to homeschool their children. Parents choosing this option should contact the DRE. As mentioned earlier in this document, materials will be provided to the parents and the DRE will arrange for periodic check-ins throughout the year to ensure that the student(s) is progressing adequately through the curriculum.

Due to class sizes and limited available classroom space, classes for Grades 6-8 will be a combination of both in-person classes and home study. Students in grades 6-9 will be assigned to groups that meet every other week. Grade 10, confirmation, will be on a three-week rotation of meeting as a whole class and then in separate, smaller groups. Students will receive classwork during the in-person classes that they are expected to complete (ideally with the assistance of parents) during the week they are assigned to home-study. Students will receive a textbook and/or handouts to take home. It is very important they bring their textbooks and any assigned work to all in-person classes.

In the unfortunate event that we are not able to continue with in-person classes for any reason, we will shift to home-study for all students. The DRE and Catechists will communicate with parents, primarily through email, to provide lesson plans to be completed at home. For grades K-1 and 3-8, parents are encouraged to make use of curriculum information available online at:

<https://www.ignatius.com/promotions/faithandlife/parish-ccd/>

We appreciate your support of the many changes we have to endure this year. There are many challenges and inconveniences, but it is all in the name of growing disciples for Jesus Christ!

THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

SEND FORTH YOUR SPIRIT: DIOCESE OF LA CROSSE

Our Vocation: Life in the Spirit

“Catechesis has to reveal in all clarity the joy and the demands of the way of Christ.” Formation for the “newness of life” in Christ should be a catechesis of:

- the Holy Spirit, the interior Master of prayer and life
- grace
- the Beatitudes
- sin and forgiveness
- the human virtues
- the Christian virtues of faith, hope and charity
- the twofold commandment of charity set forth in the Decalogue
- the Church (CCC n. 1697, 741)

Most importantly: “The first and last point of reference of this catechesis will always be Jesus Christ Himself, who is the ‘the Way, and the Truth, and the Life’” (CCC n. 1698).

Spiritual Retreat

In order to develop an ongoing relationship with Christ and the Church, young people are to participate in a spiritual Retreat. The emphasis is to focus on lifelong obligations and a commitment to live the Christian Faith.

Service Projects

As Christians, we have a lifelong commitment to serve God by serving others, especially those in need. This service of others is to include the parish, the wider community, and the missions of the universal Church.

Sponsor and Parish Mentor

Each confirmand is to have a sponsor. It is also suggested that the young people are partnered with a parish mentor who can be a source of encouragement for them when the sponsor cannot be present. Qualifications for a sponsor are such that he or she:

- must be at least sixteen years old;
- may not be a natural or adoptive parent of the confirmand (a parent or any other baptized, confirmed Catholic may be a proxy if the sponsor cannot attend);
- must be fully initiated into the Catholic Faith (Baptism, Penance, Confirmation, and Eucharist);
- must be leading a life in harmony with the Faith; and
- must be free of any canonical impediment.

After Confirmation, sponsors, along with parents and siblings should continue to assist the confirmandi in continuing to grow in knowledge of the Faith; in worship of God; in faith, hope, and charity; and to perform works of service.

Sacrament of Reconciliation in Preparation to Receive the Sacrament of Confirmation

Preparation is to include a Rite of Reconciliation for confirmandi, parents and the sponsor. The individual Sacrament of Confession is necessary to dispose properly the confirmand to receive Confirmation.

Confirmation Name

The confirmandi are to choose prayerfully a Christian name, a derivative of a Christian name, or their Baptismal name, and they are to see the connection of the name to the Christian Faith. The easiest way of making the connection is to choose a saint's name. The confirmandi should be familiar with the saint/blessed whom they chose as a new patron, and be able to articulate how the saint was a faithful witness to Christ or what the name means in relationship to the Faith in the Church. The saint in Heaven becomes a "friend" and intercessor on the young person's pilgrimage of life. One of the ways young people are called to be holy is by allowing the Christian name to manifest its particular significance in their lives.

Celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation

The young people are to dress appropriately in coming to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. Modest attire is expected in Church. This means hairstyle or ornamental jewelry should not draw attention to self, and clothing should not draw attention to any particular part of the body.

The Sacrament of Confirmation confirms us in our faith to bear witness to Jesus Christ

The great gift of the Sacrament of Confirmation is that it strengthens the person as a disciple to give witness rather than simply expressing the person's determination as a disciple to give witness. The Sacraments are not about what we have accomplished or desire to do for God. The Sacraments are God's free gift of grace to us. At the same time, these gifts of God's love involve an obligation as a disciple to bear witness to God's love in word and deed by choosing to cooperate with the grace given. (cf. Origins, CNS Documentary Service, Nov. 10, 2005, Bishop Alvaro Corrada)

The Holy Spirit lives in the depths of our minds, teaching us the truth that Jesus Christ came to reveal to us. He is the strength of our mind, allowing us to believe that Jesus is truly the Way, the Truth and the Life (cf. John 14:6). This wisdom leads to greater conviction in following Christ. The Holy Spirit is also the strength of our hearts — our wills — which can be so fearful, compromising and weak. We constantly need the Gift of Fortitude to withstand the difficulties of daily life (cf. John A. Hardon, S.J. Advanced Catholic Catechism Course. Inter Mirifica: Bardstown, Kentucky. 1989, p. 116-118). Through this special strength of the Holy Spirit in both mind and heart, we are enabled as disciples of Jesus Christ to live out the Christian life, "to spread and defend the faith by word and action as His true witnesses, to confess the name of Christ boldly, and never to be ashamed of the Cross" (CCC n. 1303).

WHY IS THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION NECESSARY IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH?

In the Sacrament of Baptism, we are reborn into the new life in Christ by receiving sanctifying grace into our soul, which is a share in God's Divine Life. Baptism is necessary because we are born without sanctifying grace due to our being separated from God through Original Sin. As the Blessed Trinity dwells within the soul because of Baptism, the person becomes an adopted child of God and a member of the Catholic Church.

In Baptism, the Holy Spirit enriches the soul with the three Theological Virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity. These virtues allow us to believe in God, to trust in His promises and to love God and our neighbor. The seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit aid us in making decisions in conformity with God's will, which lead to a life of interior joy and peace. The seven Gifts are Wisdom, Fortitude, Knowledge, Fear of the Lord, Understanding, Right Counsel and Piety.

The three Theological Virtues and the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit are given in Baptism for personal sanctification, to make us holy. In the Sacrament of Confirmation, the Holy Spirit strengthens the Virtues and the Gifts so that we can be faithful witnesses of Jesus Christ by living our faith "out loud". In our culture today, young people are bombarded with the lie that their value as a human being is based on how they look and the materials they possess. This contradicts the truth that our dignity comes from being a child of God, created in His image and likeness, and destined for eternal life with God in Heaven.

Furthermore, young people face a society that is indifferent to God and focuses on self. Selfishness only leads to hopelessness and despair. Why? We find meaning in life through self-giving love: giving of ourselves to God, to others in friendship and service, and possibly to a spouse in a life-long commitment of the Sacrament of Matrimony. We were created by God and for God, and our joy lies in knowing, loving and serving God and our neighbor through self-giving love.

The graces received in Confirmation allow us to grow in goodness through the moral virtues. The virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity inform, and give life to, the moral virtues of prudence (making good decisions), justice (giving to God and others what is due), fortitude (courage) and temperance (providing balance with desires). Under temperance falls chastity, the spiritual power that guards against falling into the trap of using another person, or being used, as an object for sexual pleasure. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit complete and perfect these same virtues.

As you can see, the Virtues and Gifts that are strengthened in Confirmation are crucial for our young people to know who they are in Christ, to protect their dignity, and to be faithful in following Him. Let us prepare well our young people to be strengthened by the Holy Spirit and continue post-Confirmation to help them grow in their cooperation with the graces of the Sacrament. Confirmation is not an end or a graduation, but a deepening of what was given at Baptism. The person is being called to a greater public witness of faith in Christ: Confirmation enables the person to fulfill this call.

As primary educators, parents are invited to continue the spiritual and human formation of their children in partnership with your pastor and the local parish community and to make sure that your teens receive valuable and ongoing faith formation. Advanced Bible studies and faith formation will stimulate intellectual curiosity about their Faith. Further, opportunities to form relationships with like-minded Catholic peers and the ongoing development of the habit of daily prayer will enable your children to make good decisions while recognizing the consequences of their choices. They will be empowered to take advantage of opportunities in apologetics so that they can defend what they believe while having the confidence to inspire in others the faith that comes with discipleship. All of this, of course, assists them in attaining the full measure of maturity in our beloved Faith.

Guidelines for the Sacrament of Confirmation

Involvement of the Family “In every program of religious education and in every Catholic school, the primacy of parents as educators in the faith is to be respected and stressed. Especially at the time of preparation for the reception of a Sacrament, parents should be fully engaged in the renewal of their own understanding of that Sacrament” (Synod V Acts n. 146). Furthermore, active participation in the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist, regular Reconciliation, daily family prayer, and Scripture reading enable families to live the Gospel life of Jesus Christ.

Period of Preparation

Young people need an adequate time of preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation for the necessary openness one needs to be receptive to the interior movements of the Holy Spirit. “Preparation for Confirmation should aim at leading the Christian toward a more intimate union with Christ and a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit — his actions, his gifts and his biddings — in order to be more capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities of Christian life. To this end catechesis for Confirmation should strive to awaken a sense of belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ, the universal Church as well as the parish community” (CCC 1309).

Therefore a minimum of preparation is to be one year, and, if the pastor deems it appropriate, to extend the time of preparation to two years. “Christians have become the temple of the Holy Spirit.” The Holy Spirit sanctifies us so that we can become saints by:

- teaching us to pray to the Father.

- prompting us to act so as to bear “the fruit of the Spirit” by charity in action.
- healing the wounds of sin and renewing us interiorly through a spiritual transformation.
- enlightening and strengthening us to live as “children of light” through “all that is good and right and true”.

Elements of Preparation

God created us to know, love and serve Him in this life in order to be united forever with Him in Heaven. We come to know the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit through the teachings of the Church and through a daily habit of prayer. We show our love for God through living the Faith and serving Him by serving our neighbor, especially those in need. Canon Law expresses the importance of proper formation. According to Canon 885 §1, care is to be taken that the Sacrament is conferred “on subjects who properly and reasonably seek it.” Further, Canon 889, §2 states that a “person to be confirmed must have the use of reason, be suitably instructed, properly disposed and able to renew baptismal promises.” These canons make it clear that our young people need to be formed through a comprehensive curriculum, one that should include but not be limited to helping the student:

- Develop a more intimate union with Jesus Christ in daily prayer (CCC 1309; Synod V Acts n. 149).
- Cultivate a relationship with the Holy Spirit as well as have a more lively familiarity with His actions, His gifts and His promptings in order to be capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities.
- Be committed to living a Sacramental Life, above all by participating in Sunday Mass each week and receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation frequently.
- Comprehend how to live life in the Holy Spirit.
- Affirm Church teachings organized under the heading: Theology of the Body.
- Study the norms regarding Marriage and the Christian Life, especially the issues that form a divide between young Catholics and their culture.
- Grasp the Church’s moral teachings on bioethical issues, in particular understanding the great harm and misery caused by abortion and contraception.

Personal Commitment

Those who seek Confirmation need to recognize the seriousness of their call and be committed to this time of formation. The confirmandi are to be committed to Sunday Mass, daily prayer, living by the Ten Commandments and committed attendance at the sessions of preparation. Confirmandi will renew their Baptismal Promises in receiving the Sacrament. Therefore, they are to know the Apostles’ Creed by heart.

For more information or in-services on the Sacrament of Confirmation, please contact:

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