

SPONSOR HANDBOOK

Confirmation



Sponsor Booklet
Epiphany of the Lord

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Companions on a Journey

Dear Sponsor,

Congratulations: You are about to embark on a rewarding journey to share and grow in your own faith. In accepting the invitation to be a sponsor or mentor for your candidate, you are making a commitment to help them grow in their relationship with the Risen Lord and the Church. This is also an opportunity for you to renew and deepen your own faith.

This handbook is designed to help you prepare your candidate for the Sacrament of Confirmation and to guide you in fruitful conversations with them.

Thank you for saying “yes” to your candidate, and remember the Holy Spirit is a present and constant companion as you journey together.

Peace,
Joey Harvey
Confirmation Coordinator
Epiphany of the Lord

Role of a Sponsor

Your role as a Confirmation sponsor is multifaceted. As you accompany your candidate throughout the preparation process, your role includes **affirming the strengths of the candidate** and pointing out **ways he or she can grow and become better in the practice of faith**. Your candidate may look to you **to be an example of how to live a life of faith**.

The role of a sponsor is one of **companionship**. Good sponsorship does not demand sainthood or perfection. Rather, it flows from journeying with the candidate, **sharing your own faith story and experiences**, and **listening to their story**. You do not need to be an expert in adolescent psychology or the doctrines of the Catholic Church. Good sponsorship is based on your willingness to share your own experiences of being Catholic and growing in your relationship with God.



Asking for Directions

Every journey begins with a first step...

As a sponsor you will be asked to fulfil a dual role. Foremost as a spiritual mentor for your candidate, but also as witness to the Body of Christ. In this section we will look at the requirements and responsibilities of a Confirmation Sponsor, along with dates and documentation that will be required.

The rest of this Handbook will be devoted to providing you with a “Road Map” - tips and suggestions for Sponsor and Candidate to explore the depth and beauty of our Catholic faith, and the many ways we experience God’s grace and mercy in our lives.

What is a Confirmation Sponsor?

Many people wonder what being a sponsor is all about. They are not sure they should be one. If that is you, it may help you to think of sponsoring a candidate in the simplest of terms. Being a “sponsor” means being a “companion”. Being a good sponsor means listening to and sharing your life and faith with your candidate. They trust you. **They have chosen you.**

Being a sponsor does not mean having all the answers, or being the perfect Christian. The sponsor/candidate relationship is not a teacher/student relationship. Rather, it is two people **discovering together** the presence of God in the world, the faith community and in each other. To be the mature companion your candidate needs, it is important for you to pray, listen, witness and model your faith.

Meeting with Candidates: Attendance required: Your papers please:

Sponsors are asked to meet with their Candidate at least two times before the celebration. Sponsors/Candidates should discuss and reflect on the core teachings of the Church, the life and mission of the Church, as well as exploring the many ways we worship, praise, and honor God

Sponsors must make every effort to be able to attend the *Confirmation Mass* which will be celebrated at Epiphany of the Lord

If you cannot attend, a proxy will stand in your place. There will be a Reception following the Mass in the Family Center

Sponsors must have a *Confirmation Sponsor Form* on file.

After the Sponsors and Candidates have completed their meeting, Sponsors are asked to submit a letter of recommendation to the Confirmation Coordinator by March 1st (see pg. 12).



Passing on the Faith

A Sponsor: Models of Christian Living

If Christianity could be taught like any other subject, we would not need sponsors. The ongoing experience of living in Christ can only be handed on from person to person. Think of Christianity like the emotions felt at an exciting event (a ball game or party). It is alive and active, exists in moments and can only be shared between people.

To be a sponsor, or model, you are passing on values to the candidate. If a person changes their point of view or action, it is because they respect and admire someone who demonstrates a different point of view or action from their own. Witnessing our faith is everyone's responsibility, but your candidate may look to you before others. They already do. They have chosen you as their sponsor.



As a witness to the Christian life, you also function as a bridge. It is your task to help your candidate know God's deep and merciful love in their life...and to help your candidate accept responsibility to their baptismal call. The way you live as a Christian role model will be your greatest gift to your candidate.

Our Catholic faith is rich in symbols, prayer and practice, but sometimes the true purpose of worship or action is lost in layers of ritual. Obviously, one could study for a lifetime and still not fully know all that could be learned about the Church, its teachings and its traditions. During this period of immediate preparation we will focus on what can be considered the most basic truths related to being a practicing Catholic.

Some youth (and not a few adults) find it difficult to accept certain teachings of the Church. Hopefully your candidate will be honest in expressing such difficulties if they exist. For your part, do not be surprised if you do not feel fully equipped to answer some of these challenges; don't worry, neither did the first disciples of Jesus!

The Church calls us to be faithful witnesses not experts. If you get stumped don't worry. This is an excellent opportunity to learn and even struggle with these questions and issues together. 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.

In your conversations help the Candidate explore how the events of his or her life are glimpses of the "vision of the glory of God." All young people, particularly older adolescents, are exploring their beliefs and values. They are searching for a worthy adventure upon which to embark; living the gospel daily is surely such an adventure.

Passing on the Faith Activity

The Creed is one of the foundational and most ancient ways that we express our faith as Catholics and is the cornerstone of all Christian faiths...

Instructions: Read through the Nicene Creed together, one article at a time.

- Together mark with an “X” each article that you and/or the candidate need to discuss in order to clarify its meaning.
- Mark with an “O” each article the youth may be having some trouble accepting. No mark indicates that the article is understood and accepted.
- As time permits, discuss each article so marked. If necessary, agree on what further study you need to do together.

NICENE CREED

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,
and became man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.



Passing on the Faith Activity

The ability to understand and articulate our faith is an essential skill to fully live the Gospel ...

Instructions: Read each of the following statements, asking your candidate to describe his/her present attitude toward it by choosing one of these three positions:

1. I believe it is true and I think I could explain it to others.
 2. I believe it is true but I do not really understand it that well.
 3. I am having trouble accepting it as really true.
- Once your candidate has chosen a response to a statement, share your response.
 - Discuss both of your stances.

Faith Essentials:

1. God created the universe and continues to hold it in existence and exercise control over it without interfering with our free will.
2. All humanity has participated in sin to some degree and need God's grace to achieve salvation.
3. Jesus is the only Son of God, fully divine and fully human.
4. It is through Jesus, his teachings, his example and ultimately his saving death and resurrection that all people have access to the redemption offered by God.
5. Though all churches and religions can help people find Jesus and the salvation offered by God, the Roman Catholic Church is the only Church founded by Jesus through his Apostles.
6. Though the Roman Catholic Church has a history of faults and weaknesses, for me it is still one of the best means I have to know about God and to become the fully human person God intends me to become.
7. The Sacraments have the power to put me in direct contact with the risen Jesus and to experience his saving actions just as truly as if I had lived and walked with him 2,000 years ago.
8. There is an immortal life after death for everyone.
9. Life after death will be spent either in the presence of God and all those who have received His grace, or eternally separated from God.

The Word Road Map for Life



In the beginning...

God's creation reveals His presence in the same way that sculptors leave a personal mark and style on the marble they shape. God has also revealed Himself in a more specific way, to and through the hand of humankind. We find this deposit of revelation in two forms, Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition.

God reveals the truth of himself through revelation. The word "revelation" literally means that something is revealed or uncovered.

Revelation is essential in our life to understand our own mission and the relationship between ourselves and God and the rest of the world.

"The desire for God is written in the human heart."

~ St. Augustine

Augustine tells us that we are made, not only by God, but *for* him, "*our hearts are restless until they rest in [God].*"

Scripture – God's word written by human hand, is a record of God's revelation in history. Through it we come to know the stories of our faith. Not only do the Scriptures reminded us of the events of the past, but because they are infused with God's spirit, this collection of ancient stories, poetry and historic writings still uncover a God who is working in our world today.

What does the bible mean for us?

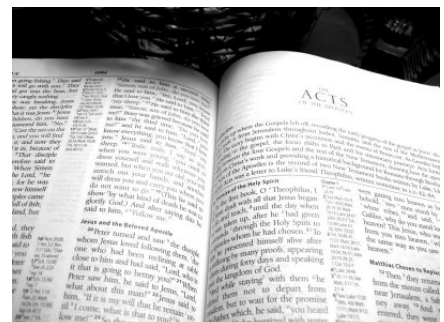
Once we understand something about God, His revelation to us, and have discovered the Bible, we must then ask what it all means for us.

The Bible contains the story of our origin fall from grace and centuries of redemptive work culminating in the person of Jesus Christ, the sending of the Holy Spirit, and the founding of His Church. Scripture is our guide to explain our relationship with God and the basis and authority of our life together in the Church. Everything in our Church's tradition is rooted in the Sacred Scriptures.

Our Mass, the Divine Liturgy, is saturated with Scriptural references, quotations, creeds, and theology found in the Bible. The Sacraments are all found in the Bible. Most importantly, our knowledge of Christ is found in the Bible—His word, His teachings, His truth has been recorded and passed on so that we may know him today

The Word is alive, and it can be alive in you if you read it and experience it first hand.

~Life Teen



The Word Activity

If your Candidate is intimidated or unfamiliar with Scripture, there are many ways to read and study the Word of God. Start by picking a Gospel to read. You will find familiar stories you have heard at Mass or Faith Formation. Read one of St. Paul's letters in the New Testament and you will hear more about the teachings of our Lord. Many Bibles have an introduction printed in them to explain about the author, audience and setting of the book.

You can also *pray* through the Scriptures as well. The Church calls this meditative approach *Lectio Divina*. This is a four-step approach involving reading, meditating, conversing with God, and contemplating His Word. You can easily begin by choosing a short story, teaching or Psalm.

If you have never tried *Lectio Divina* before, give it a try!



"Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ"

~St. Jerome

Scripture Search:

Look up and discuss five of the Scripture passages listed below.

- 1) What is the historical context/subtext of this passage (how does that influence our modern understanding of the passage)?
- 2) What is the spiritual context of this passage (what does this passage tell us about the nature of God, about love, forgiveness, etc)?
- 3) What practical implications does it have, for the way we should live out our Christianity?

Genesis 1:1

Genesis 3:17-19

Exodus 20:1-17

2 Samuel 7:12-16

John 1:1-14

Matthew 25:31-46

Luke 1:26-35

Luke 22: 19-20

Mark 16:1-7

1 Corinthians 15:1-8

Ephesians 2:11-22

Lectio Divina

Praying the Scriptures with *Lectio Divina* is great way to explore the Word of God.

"*Lectio Divina*" is Latin for "spiritual reading" or "holy reading". It is the ancient prayer practice that allows us to encounter the Living God through His written Word.

For tips and instructions on the practice of *Lectio Divina* visit one of the following:

<https://bustedhalo.com/ministry-resources/lectio-divina-beginners-guide>

Bible Passages and their Themes for *Lectio Divina*

Psalm 91: Finding Shelter in God

Luke 5:1-11: Becoming Jesus' Disciple

John 4:4-26: Drink the Living Water

Romans 8:28-30: God's unfailing love

Prayer

A prayer life is essential to the Christian life — it is "a vital and personal relationship with the living and true God." (CCC, 2558)

From the beginning of time, man has attempted to get in touch with some greater Supernatural Force or Divine Being. The ancient peoples of the world did this through hymns, songs, and rituals of thanksgiving, praise, and petition. Today, thousands of years later, people across the globe continue to lift their minds and hearts to God in prayer. Prayer is man's natural reaction to the yearning for God that is implanted deep within him. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us "In the New Covenant, prayer is the living relationship of the children of God with their Father,...with his Son Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit." (CCC 2565)



"How to pray? This is a simple matter. I would say: Pray any way you like, so long as you do pray."

~ Pope John Paul II

In addition to hearing the prayers of the people, Jesus Himself is found praying numerous times throughout the Gospels, both alone and in the company of his disciples and crowds of followers. He prays before the most important times in His life, including His Baptism, Transfiguration, and many of the miracles He performs. During His Passion, the most trying and difficult hours of His life, prayer flows once again from Jesus' mouth. He prays for strength in the Garden of Gethsemane and continues praying up until His very last words on the cross: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." (Lk 23:46)

If Jesus, the perfect, divine God-Man prayed so frequently and fervently during His life on earth, how much more do we, as sinners, have a need for prayer as a part of our daily lives?

"Mental prayer is nothing else than an intimate friendship, a frequent heart-to-heart conversation with Him by whom we know ourselves to be loved." ~ Saint Teresa of Avila

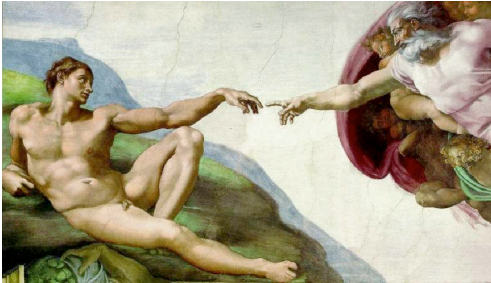
Through our prayers of praise, adoration, and thanksgiving, we acknowledge our pettiness and insignificance compared to God's greatness and power, as well as our dependence on Him for everything that we have. Our prayers of repentance keep us aware of our sinful human nature and allow us to experience God's boundless mercy.

Finally, our prayers of petition force us to think about what we truly want and need. Through daily prayer, we come to a deeper understanding of both ourselves and God. We do not pray for God's sake, but for our own sake, so that our relationship with our Lord may be more complete and our lives may be filled with God's goodness.

*Michelle Bauman,
Catholic News Agency,*



Prayer Activity



Connecting with God:

Prayer is an essential skill for effective membership in the faith community, for maintaining an overall Christian lifestyle and developing a deep and lasting relationship with God.

The focus for the Sponsor is to help develop those skills and habits that will lead the Candidate to closer relationship with Jesus over the years. How one prays is not as critical as that one prays. Your discussion with your candidate, therefore, should focus on nurturing a positive attitude toward prayer and helping them discover prayers and prayer forms so they can develop a style of praying that is suitable for them at this point in life.

With your Candidate explore the ways we communicate with God. Share some of your personal examples of the power and benefits of prayer.

How to Develop a Personal Prayer Life: The Lord's Prayer as Our Model

Jesus gave His disciples a model of prayer that we call The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13). From this model we can learn exciting insights that will teach us to pray.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.

1. When we pray, we are approaching a good and loving heavenly Father. God is holy, but He is tender and He is near. It is only in His holy name that we can pray at all.

Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

2. Pray for others, that Christ will rule in their hearts, and that He will soon return. Our first priority is to pray for others. This is called intercession. God loves the world so intensely that it is His will that people everywhere would love, forgive and heal, just like His son Jesus. He is building His kingdom on earth in the hearts of men and women.

Give us today our daily bread.

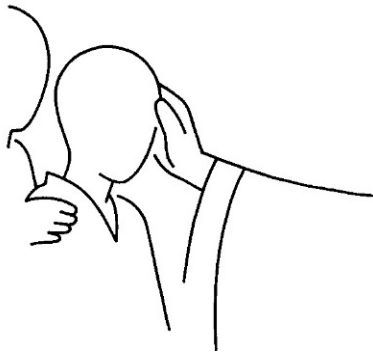
3. Pray, believing that God will meet all your needs. God is so good to us, He delights in meeting those needs that will enable us to live and serve and trust Him.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

4. Confess your sins in response to God's holiness and grace. Confession is agreeing with God that we have failed Him; we have not lived up to His holy standard. Confession is also accepting God's grace - His continual forgiveness because of Christ's sacrifice. With this understanding (and His grace) have the humility and love we need to forgive others.

And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

5. Pray for God's protection and power to resist the temptations to choose sinful actions. We are tapping into His protection and His victory over evil.



A Sponsor's Prayer

God of all ages,
You send out your Spirit
To touch the hearts of people
So that they may believe in you
And in Jesus, whom you sent.

Look kindly on all candidates for Confirmation
As they listen to your voice.
Open their hearts to your Spirit
And bring to fulfillment the good work
You have begun in them.

As I reach out to welcome
My candidate in mutual ministry,
Make me an instrument of your love.
Teach me to revere what is holy in others,
And to be patient with what I do not understand.

Deepen my faith in the Gospel
And help me to pass it on by good example.
With those who are hesitant or afraid,
Let me be a source of encouragement.
And with those who are weak,
Let me be a pillar of strength.

I humbly accept the ministry of sponsor
And pray that you will continue to
Guide me and sustain me
With your Spirit as I help
Build your household.
I praise you through Christ our Lord.



Sponsor Letter of Recommendation

After you and your Candidate have completed your meetings and you have observed a desire and preparedness in your Candidate to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, please submit a letter of recommendation to Joey Harvey by March 1st. ***Letters should be submitted via email to joey@epiphanycatholic.org***

The letter should include your Candidate's name along with a brief statement affirming your Candidate's disposition/readiness to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.

- You may also wish to include a brief description of your sessions together.
- Information regarding your Candidate's volunteer ministry or retreat experience.
- Your observation on your Candidate's spiritual growth, etc.

