

Saint Teresa of Calcutta Parish



Decision Point Handbook

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**“...Confirmed by the gift of the Spirit,
that they give witness to Christ by
lives built on faith and love...”**

General Intercession from the Rite of Confirmation

Congratulations!

Your child has chosen to prepare for the Sacrament of Confirmation. The moment your child was welcomed into the Church at Baptism you began their journey of faith with them. This is an important part of the road for you both; a chance to stop and view where you have been, where you are, and where you are going in your life of faith. As a parish community, we strive to support you and your family and share in that life of faith with you.

This handbook is a resource for you as you continue this journey together, especially during the next few months during the Decision Point Program. This program is designed to not only strengthen the teachings of the Church that have been taught to you but also to bring your faith alive in everything you do. Decision Point is different, it is not about reading and responding to questions on a test, but how to make positive decisions in your life and to live our Catholic faith in everything we do.

The Decision Point team looks forward to being part of this journey with you and your child.

Mr. Zachary Warren

Decision Point Coordinator

decisionpoint@stteresacalcutta.com

<https://stteresacalcutta.com/prep>

CONFIRMATION: General Information

Confirmation is the sacrament in which those who have been baptized receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit, whom the Lord sent upon his apostles at Pentecost. It is the sacrament that celebrates God's special strengths and gifts in those who have been baptized. As is the ordinary custom in the United States, confirmation is the final Sacrament of Initiation. The Sacraments of initiation are baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist.

In baptism, a person is freed from sin and becomes a follower of Christ, a Christian, they receive grace and life from the Holy Spirit. In Confirmation, the baptismal vows are renewed and the sealing of the Spirit serves as a preparation for a mature Christian life, filling those confirmed with the strength to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ in all they do.

In the Eucharist, the great sign of Christian unity, the faithful are nourished and strengthened throughout their earthly pilgrimage. We are united with Christ in his Body and are transformed into a more loving and united community of believers. By partaking in these sacramental rites, the faithful are acknowledged as Catholics and are commissioned to carry out the mission of Christ and his Church.

The Rite of Confirmation

The Rite of Confirmation:

- Is celebrated during Mass
- Begins after the Liturgy of the Word
- Is presided over by the bishop

There are four parts to the Rite:

- Renewal of baptismal vows
- Laying on of hands
- Anointing with Sacred Chrism
- Sign of peace

Candidates Preparing for Confirmation

Candidates wishing to receive confirmation at Saint Teresa of Calcutta:

- Must freely choose to be confirmed and make their desire known.
- Understand the lifetime commitment they are undertaking to faithfully uphold, practice, and participate in their Catholic faith.
- Must be in the state of grace
- Must show adequate knowledge of the Catholic faith and participate in the religious education requirements as prescribed by the pastor of Saint Teresa of Calcutta Parish. This may include:
 - Successfully completing prior years of PREP or STC Religious Education classes
 - Participation in the Decision Point Program
 - Attending the Confirmation Retreat
 - Completing a project or assignment about the Saint they are choosing for their confirmation name.
- Must be practicing their faith, by doing at minimum the following:
 - Attending Mass on Sundays and other holy days of obligation
 - Makes a habit of regular participation in the Sacrament of Reconciliation
 - Actively works to foster and grow their relationship with God through prayer, study, and reflection of the scriptures.

Christian Commitment to Service

Jesus came “not to be served, but to serve.” (Mt 20:28) The Church is a servant community and all those accepting full membership in the Church are also accepting the responsibility to serve others.

Candidates for the reception of confirmation are asked to select works of charity that are geared to their own special talents and abilities. Service should be performed freely and willingly. It could help the parish, neighborhood, or the local community. The works for charity are meant to foster the candidate’s intention to live a life of service as a member of the Church. **Each candidate is asked to complete a minimum of 15 hours for their works of charity.** This work should be done freely and willingly and no compensation should be expected or received. As stated above, service is an essential for our lives as Catholics, your children should be encouraged to find ways to serve the community in ways they enjoy. Finding ways that allows them to foster a spirit of service in areas that they enjoy, will allow them to be successful in preparing not only for confirmation but also as they go forward in their life with Christ.

Parental Responsibilities

As the **primary religious educators** of your children, you are a **VITAL** component for the preparation of confirmation. It has been your faith and your witness that have laid the foundation for your child. While the candidate must want to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, your opinion of this sacrament and the preparation process will have a dramatic impact on your child. As parents, you need to keep in mind the responsibility placed on your child and his/ her Sponsor for this sacrament. **Encouragement and enthusiasm** for this sacrament and the preparation process are two of the greatest gifts you can give. Here are some ways that you will be asked to help your child for confirmation:

Confirmation Preparation:

- Help your child discern if he/she is ready to make the commitment to begin preparation for confirmation. Help your child understand that confirmation activities and Decision Point classes **must be a priority for the next several months**.
- A schedule with important dates will be given to you; please mark your calendar to ensure your child is able to complete all requirements and assignments on time and ensure all forms and paperwork are returned on time.
- Be an attentive listener to the religious needs of your child. The Sacrament of Confirmation need not be received in the 7th grade year. Keep in constant communication with your child and his/her Sponsor. Challenge but respect their feelings.

Sponsors

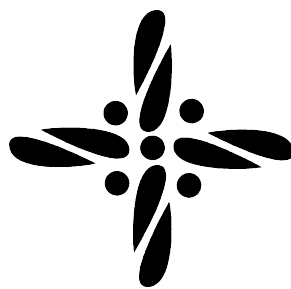
- Assist your child in the selection of a suitable Sponsor. You may want to read over the Sponsor's responsibilities and help your child form a list of possible Sponsors. Enter into a dialogue with potential sponsors about the meaning of their role and the needs of your child. Turn in the completed Sponsor form by the due date.
- Encourage and initiate meetings with your child and Sponsor.
- If necessary, attend practice on behalf of the sponsor and relay any important information to the Sponsor so they can be prepared for the day of confirmation.

Works of Charity

- Help your child choose a work of charity . Again, emphasize that this activity may need to be a priority over other activities.
- Share with your child how you use your own gifts and talents in service to the Church and community. (time, talent, treasure)
- Become involved in your child's works of charity by volunteering to drive and help as needed.
- Encourage your child to continue to serve the parish and community after confirmation. Guide and support them in using their gifts of time, talent and treasure as part of their christian life.

Example by Faith

- Support your child and sponsor through prayer.
- Continually lead by example and encourage your child to participate in the sacramental life of the Church, both now and after the reception of this sacrament.
- **Please ensure that you and your child are regularly attending Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation**, providing opportunities for the reception of the Eucharist.
- See that your child regularly receives the Sacrament of Reconciliation **and that they attended confession at least one month before confirmation.**
- Support the continued religious education of your child after Confirmation by encouraging their participation in activities such as Youth Group or other aspects and activities of parish life.



Choosing a Sponsor

Sponsor Responsibilities and Requirements

The role of the Confirmation Sponsor is often an overlooked and under-used source for a candidate's preparation and growth. Sponsorship is one very concrete means of sharing in the Church's teaching ministry.

The Sponsor should take on more than a casual interest in one person's spiritual life. You are preparing for a life commitment that will influence everything you do from now on. Your sponsor should be a valuable instrument by listening to your thoughts, sharing their own experiences and understandings, and by introducing you to whatever will enhance Catholic Christian growth.

For some, sponsorship is no more than the momentary "honor" a candidate bestows on someone they think highly of. Surely being a sponsor should be considered an honor, but its ministry and responsibility go beyond the day of confirmation. It is our hope that our confirmation candidates will be fortunate enough to find Sponsors who care for them and are eager to participate in their preparation process.

Below are the requirements for the Confirmation Sponsor. **Before a sponsor accepts this responsibility, we urge sponsors to weigh each requirement and to be honest with their candidate if they can or cannot live up to these needs.**

- A parent may not be the Sponsor for his/her own child.
- The Sponsor **MUST** be an active practicing member of the Catholic Church and initiated in the Sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation. If married, the Sponsor must be married according to the laws of the Church.
- The Sponsor must be sufficiently mature for the responsibility (emotionally and spiritually) and at least 16 years of age.
- Complete the required Affirmation of Faith for a Sponsor and return to the Office of Religious Education. Due date determined by the PREP office and listed on paperwork.
 - This paperwork requires the signature of the sponsor's pastor.

- The Sponsor must be someone who can commit personal time to the candidate:
 - Allowing the candidate to witness the Sponsor's own practice and faith and developing a strong relationship with the candidate.
 - Attending the Confirmation practice
 - Attending the Confirmation Mass
 - Praying for the candidate and their family.
 - Challenge and encourage the candidate to meet the requirements asked of them.
- A Sponsor should be available as a faith companion and support in their candidates life:
 - Continuing to touch base regularly with you after confirmation.
 - Encouraging the candidate to continue a life of service to others.
 - Continuing to encourage regular attendance at the Mass, liturgies, or prayer services together.
 - Encourage your candidate to regularly receive the Sacraments.
 - Continued prayer for the candidate.



Confirmation Name

Throughout the scriptures, we have examples of God calling those He has chosen. Many times these chosen people are given a new name as part of the mission they are undertaking, Abram became Abraham (Genesis 17:5), Jacob became Israel (Genesis 35:10), Simon became Peter (Matthew 16:17-18) and Saul became Paul (Acts 13:9). In this tradition as we begin this new phase of our life in the Church, we take on a new name.

The names we choose are those of the Saints, these individuals have lived lives that reflect their deep faith and love of God. We choose these saints as an example of how we should live our lives and who will be models for the life we wish to live. Because of this each candidate should choose a Saint that is meaningful to them, and who as their patron will serve as a model of the Christian life.

While there is nothing wrong with picking a “family name”, candidates are encouraged to research and learn about their saint before making a final choice. Candidates should choose a saint that is inspiring to them, not just a family tradition or what is expected, encourage your child to prayerfully research and consider this choice, and joyfully support the name they choose.

As you research your saint, you should take care to “bookmark” and keep track of the information you have discovered. As part of the Decision Point program each child will be required to present a project on their saint. Having their research handy will allow you to not only learn more about the saint but will aid you in completing this project. Information about the Saint Project will be distributed at Decision Point and the candidates will have a number of weeks to complete this project.



Confirmation Dress Code for **Confirmandi**

Below is a general guideline for the dress code for Confirmation. Each year the PREP Office will publish an official dress code for confirmation, as that list is the most accurate should there be any discrepancies between the list below and the revised yearly dress code, the yearly dress code published by the PREP Office should be followed. Confirmandi will wear confirmation robes for confirmation, information will be distributed at the start of the year regarding robe distribution and measurements.

Dress Code for Young Men

1. A light colored dress shirt and dress pants must be worn.
2. Dress shoes only, no sneakers.
3. Hair should be styled away from the forehead.
4. No caps or hats.

Dress Code Young Ladies

1. A light colored dress or dress shirt, skirt or dress pants must be worn.
2. Dress shoes only, no sneakers.
3. Hair should be styled away from the forehead.
4. No caps or hats

Please remember the Sacrament of Confirmation takes place during the Mass, dress and appearance should reflect the Sacred nature of the celebration in which we are participating.

Decision Point Class Requirements

Children of Saint Teresa of Calcutta Parish wishing to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation at STC are required to complete the Decision Point program as part of their preparation for confirmation. This requirement is for both children in the PREP program and Saint Teresa of Calcutta Education Center School program. To both successfully complete the Decision Point Program and have an enjoyable Decision Point Class year candidates should have the following:

- A sincere desire to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- A spirit of cooperation and prayerful attitude.
- A sufficient knowledge of the basic beliefs of the Catholic Faith as demonstrated through:
 - Active participation in class.
 - Successful completion of all assignments.
 - Complete and Present Saint Project
- Regularly Attended Mass.
- Receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to Confirmation.
- Attendance at the following:
 - All Class periods -- Irregular attendance and/or poor participation may result in the delay of the sacrament.
 - The Confirmation Retreat – Date and time provided on yearly schedule
 - Confirmation Practice – Date and time provided on yearly schedule (Candidate and Sponsor must attend)
- Completion of paperwork and forms:
 - Sacrament Documentation
 - Signed and sealed (by Sponsor's pastor) Affirmation of Faith for a Sponsor
 - Retreat Permission Form (If necessary)
 - Works of charity Documentation

Class Rules and Guidelines for Students

Decision Point requires group interaction and discussion amongst the candidates and their group leaders, both in a large and small group setting. To ensure that everyone can be heard and information can be shared we ask that everyone follows these simple classroom rules. These rules will also be covered at the first class:

- Come to class early so we can begin at the assigned starting time. Our goal is to be respectful of everyone's time by concluding on time each week. We ask the same respect from everyone so we can start on time.
- Take care of our personal needs (restroom, snacking, etc.) before the start of class. Getting up during class is distracting to those around us.
- We are guests in the spaces we occupy and will treat the facilities we are using with respect. **Additionally, should we occupy any STC Education classroom NO ONE is permitted to enter a desk, locker, cabinet, etc. even if it is their normally assigned school classroom.**
- Cell Phones should be **OFF** and **AWAY**.
- Hats and Hoodies should be removed or lowered during class when entering the room and when sitting at the tables. The proper posture when at class should be sitting with feet on the floor with our heads up looking at the person speaking giving them our full attention.
- Listen and respect others, treating others the way we would like to be treated.
- No talking while others are speaking, this is your time to listen and reflect.
- Complete projects and assignments on time.
- Missed work must be handed in at the start of the NEXT class period.
- **Bring your questions! Anything related to Confirmation, Catholicism, or our faith is welcomed and encouraged! We are here to help you grow in your relationship with God and want to help you anyway we can!**

Attendance Policy

Attendance in the Decision Point Program is mandatory; however, we also understand that things come up and conflicts arise. With this in mind but also understanding our short time together we allow for only **TWO absences each year**. If there is a missed class parents will receive an email outlining the missed work. Students should have the missed work completed before the next class period. The candidate's group leader will review and confirm that all missed work was completed. Missed work will not be sent out in advance.

Excessive Absences

Students who miss excessive amounts of class put themselves at risk for missing the reception of confirmation this year. Should an issue arise with attendance the Decision Point Coordinator will attempt to address the attendance issue with you. Students who show a willingness to make up work, provide doctors notes for excessive absences, and who are actively working with the Decision Point Coordinator to address these issues will be considered in good standing unless otherwise notified. Failure to follow these steps will result in the Decision Point Coordinator sending a recommendation to the Coordinator of Religious Education and the Pastor that your child may not be ready to receive the sacrament this year.

Because of the many logistical and administrative variables, we **CANNOT** allow changes between class sessions. For example, if your child is registered for Monday Sessions and they are not able to attend their normally scheduled class they **MAY NOT** attend the Sunday session as a substitution. Sports and extracurricular activities are no reasons to miss Decision Point on a consistent basis. At times it may be possible to permanently move a child from one session to another; this will be at the discretion of the Coordinator of Religious Education and the Decision Point Coordinator as well as class availability. It is important to review the confirmation schedule when it is released and if possible reschedule your child prior to the start of the class year.

Please keep in mind that if you cannot ensure your child's attendance in this program, we cannot ensure your child will be ready to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation and your child may be asked to delay receiving the sacrament until the following year.

Candidate Review Guide

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia publishes a packet of topics that each student preparing for Confirmation should know. **The presiding bishop at the sacrament may choose to ask the confirmandi these questions.** This packet will be included in your child's folder at the first class. **Parents and sponsors should study this packet with their child.** Additionally, the items below are considered assumed knowledge for candidates entering the Decision Point program. Please study the packet from the Archdiocese along with the items below. Decision Point will make time to **review** and answer questions on the packet and items below. However, **it is expected that they are being studied at home.**

The Commandments

- I am the Lord, your God; you shall not have strange gods before me.
- You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain.
- Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.
- Honor your father and your mother.
- You shall not kill.
- You shall not commit adultery.
- You shall not steal.
- You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
- You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.
- You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.

The Sacraments

- Baptism
- Confirmation
- Eucharist
- Confession (Reconciliation)
- Matrimony (Marriage)
- Holy Orders
- Anointing of the Sick

Beatitudes

- Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
- Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.
- Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.
- Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
- Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.
- Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
- Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Prayers

- Sign of the Cross
- Our Father
- Hail Mary
- The Glory Be
- Act of Contrition
- Apostles' Creed
- Prayer to Saint Michael

Marks of the Church

- The Church is One
- The Church is Holy
- The Church is Catholic
- The Church is Apostolic

