



*Confirmed in a
Faithful
Community*

A Senior High Confirmation Process

Catechist's Guide



Immediate Preparation Edition



Catechist's Guide

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Catechist's Guide
Immediate Preparation Edition

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Contents

	Introduction	5
Session 1	Guided and Strengthened by the Holy Spirit	10
Session 2	Prayer: Communion with God.....	19
Session 3	Christian Morality: What Does Love Look Like?	35
Session 4	Christian Service: Witnessing to God’s Justice.....	46
Session 5	Sacraments of Initiation.....	57
Session 6	Baptism: Born in the Holy Spirit.....	67
Session 7	The Eucharist: Nourished Through the Holy Spirit.....	77
Session 8	Confirmation: Sealed with the Holy Spirit.....	87
Session 9	Confirmation: Celebrating the Rite.....	99
	Acknowledgments.....	110

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Introduction

Confirmed in a Faithful Community, Immediate Preparation Edition: An Overview

Effective sacramental preparation attends to the individual faith journey. Preparation for a sacrament is not about clock hours or the length and quantity of content. It is a conversion process. As “source and summit,” the celebration of the Eucharist in liturgy is an important time to acknowledge, celebrate, and support candidates seeking sacramental preparation (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1324). In addition, members of the community should be seen as resources for and witnesses and stewards of candidates for sacramental preparation.

Allowing Confirmation preparation to be nourished and informed by the principles that flow from Christian initiation promotes effective programs and an integrated vision for sacraments. When Confirmation is presented as something separated from Baptism and the Eucharist, the message is this: Baptism and the Eucharist are for children; Confirmation is the mark of adult faith. Our task is to link Confirmation with the other two sacraments of initiation, while we consider the potential for the distinctive gift of Confirmation.

For youth ministry leaders and religious educators, the challenge is to communicate the gift within the sacrament of Confirmation while challenging candidates to remember Baptism in its fullness and to live the Eucharist as the ever-renewing sacrament and highest celebration of the faith community. This means that we allow the principles of the Christian initiation process to guide and shape our programs.

At the same time, we recognize the distinct challenge and opportunity of applying those principles as we prepare young people who have already received the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist and are now preparing to receive Confirmation. At its heart, Confirmation is further initiation into Christian discipleship. We invite young people to join us in the mission of Jesus to promote justice, service, and healing. Confirmation strengthens young people as disciples in a way that helps them live out their baptismal calling and their life in the Eucharist.

Catechist's Guide, Immediate Preparation ***Edition: An Overview***

This manual provides catechetical sessions for *immediate preparation* for the sacrament of Confirmation. Each session is designed for a 90-minute gathering. The sessions help the candidates prepare in a personal, intense, and prayerful way for the celebration of the rite of Confirmation. As the candidates move toward the celebration of Confirmation, the concentration of these sessions focuses exclusively on the Church and the life of the believer within it.

The core beliefs, moral vision, and sacramental life of Roman Catholicism are explored in the following integrated way:

- *Session 1, Guided and Strengthened by the Holy Spirit.* Introduction to the role and influence of the Holy Spirit; description of how the gifts of the Spirit animate the life of Christians
- *Session 2, Prayer: Communion with God.* Prayer understood as a way of communicating with God and other believers; experience with prayer methods; reflection on one's daily prayer practice.
- *Session 3, Christian Morality: What Does Love Look Like?* Overview of the Christian moral vision; explanation of its grounding in the love revealed in and through Jesus
- *Session 4, Christian Service: Witnessing to God's Justice.* Presents service and justice as a constitutive part of the Christian life
- *Session 5, Sacraments of Initiation.* Review and simulated experience of the Church's sacramental initiation of new members
- *Session 6, Baptism: Born in the Holy Spirit.* The sacrament as the basis of all Christian life. It is the door to all other sacraments; Baptism unites us with Christ; symbols, meaning of baptismal promises
- *Session 7, The Eucharist: Nourished Through the Holy Spirit.* Key aspects of the Eucharist: as thanksgiving to God the Father for Creation, as a sacrificial memorial of Christ's Passover, and as the presence of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit
- *Session 8, Confirmation: Sealed with the Holy Spirit.* Confirmation increases and deepens baptismal grace, unites us more firmly to Christ, binds us more perfectly to the Church, increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit.
- *Session 9, Confirmation: Celebrating the Rite.* An introduction to the rite of Confirmation; overview of final preparations for celebrating the sacrament

Each session begins with a brief overview, a list of expected outcomes, and background reading that includes a list of corresponding candidate's handbook pages, related paragraphs in the *Catechism*, and scriptural passages. The next element is a suggested schedule, which you can use as a starting point and modify according to your circumstances. A checklist of the preparation required, including all materials needed, is the next part of the presentation of every session. A complete description of the session procedure is then provided.

Active Learning

Active learning is used throughout the sessions. The intent of active learning is certainly not to avoid “teaching”; on the contrary, active learning is based on the conviction that *real* teaching occurs when both the facilitator and the participants see themselves as *colearners*. This is especially the case when the subject is faith. When it comes to faith, we are all beginners. You are not expected to give the candidates faith, much less give them God; rather, you are invited to draw from them and celebrate the faith relationship they already have with a God who is present within and to them.

Journaling Exercises

The practice of journal writing is an optional component of the process of preparation. Because of the program’s content as well as the themes of the journal exercises, the candidates may find the practice meaningful. The only rule in journal writing is that the participants be spontaneous and honest. They should not think too much; instead they should just take their pens and begin writing, letting the words or images flow.

Because catechesis requires personal reflection, incorporating opportunities for journaling, whether on-site or off-site, is strongly suggested.

Prayer Experiences

Each session includes opportunities and suggestions for prayer that is focused on the session’s theme. Prayer forms include guided meditation, shared prayer, music, silence, prayer by young people, and reflective reading. These prayer experiences give the candidates an opportunity to bring their insights and concerns to God in prayer. The time frame for prayer experiences varies from 5 to 20 minutes.

Teaching *Confirmed in a Faithful Community*

Preparing Yourself

Read each session or activity before you facilitate it; then use it creatively to meet the needs of the young people in your group. Knowing your audience will help you determine which strategies will work best. Some activities require preparation. Allow yourself adequate time to get ready.

All the sessions include presentations of key concepts and teachings. The session plans offer guidelines for those talks. Preparing for those presentations is vital to the success of each session.

Hospitality

Create a welcoming environment for the candidates. The preferred physical environment is homey and noninstitutional, clean and organized but relaxed and inviting.

Your physical setting might not easily lend itself to the creation of such an environment. You may, for instance, have to use a grade-school classroom or, worse yet, a school gymnasium or cafeteria. But an inviting environment, if not exactly a warm one, is possible even in such settings. Consider the options available for lighting, organization of chairs, music, and so on.

Remember also that beyond all the niceties of the physical environment, the key to establishing a welcoming atmosphere is the manner and attitude of the hosts themselves. Be prepared to warmly greet the candidates as they arrive, addressing them by name if possible. Think of a few opening lines to help ease them into conversation with you and with one another, recognizing that initial conversation between many people, young and old alike, can be uncomfortable. Ultimately, the secret to true hospitality is this: Be prepared to treat the young people as you would want to be treated if you were in their position.

Standard Materials

To save time, consider gathering frequently used materials in bins and storing those bins in a place that is accessible to all staff and volunteer leaders. Here are some recommendations for organizing the bins.

Supply Bin

The following items appear frequently in the materials checklists:

- *The Catholic Youth Bible*® (CYB) or another Bible, one copy for each candidate
- candidate's handbook, one copy for each candidate
- masking tape
- cellophane tape
- washable and permanent markers (thick-line and thin-line)
- pens or pencils
- self-stick notes
- scissors
- newsprint
- blank paper, scrap paper, and notebook paper
- index cards
- baskets
- candles
- matches or a lighter

Music Bin

Young people often find profound meaning in the music and lyrics of songs, both past and present. Also, the right music can set the appropriate mood for a prayer or an activity. Begin with a small collection of tapes or CDs in a music bin, and add to it over time. You might ask the young people to put some of their favorite music in the bin. The bin might include the following styles of music:

- *Prayerful, reflective instrumental music*, such as the kind that is available in the adult alternative section of music stores. Labels that specialize in this type of music include Windham Hill and Narada.
- *Popular songs with powerful messages*. If you are not well versed in popular music, ask the young people to offer suggestions.
- *The music of contemporary Catholic artists*. Many teens are familiar with the work of Catholic musicians such as Steve Angrisano, Sarah Hart, David W. Kauffman, Michael Mahler, Jesse Manibusan, and Danielle Rose.
Also consider including songbooks and hymnals. You might also check with your liturgy or music director for recordings of parish hymns.
- *Hymnals or songbooks*. Many of the suggested songs in this book are found in *Gather Comprehensive* (GIA Publications, 7404 South Mason Avenue, Chicago, IL 60638; 1-800-GIA-1358); and in *Spirit & Song* (OCP Publications, P.O. Box 18030, Portland, OR 97218-0030; 1-800-548-8749).

Some Closing Thoughts

As a catechist for *Confirmed in a Faithful Community, Immediate Preparation Edition*, you have taken on an exciting and profoundly important task. We hope you find this material helpful as you invite young people into a deeper relationship with the marvelous community of faith we know as the Catholic Church and with Christ. Please be assured of our continual prayers for you and the young people you serve.



Session 1

Guided and Strengthened by the Holy Spirit

Session Overview

The candidates have been baptized into Christ in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. They have already received God's Spirit. As with all the baptized, they are called and empowered to live in the Holy Spirit. This session guides the candidates toward understanding the nature and activity of the Holy Spirit and celebrating the presence of the Spirit in their lives and in the life of the Church.

In this session, the candidates learn that discerning the presence of the Holy Spirit is a lifelong task to which they are committed as members of the Church. Thus, they begin to recognize that the stuff of their everyday lives is the place of God's presence. Here is where human spirit (individual and community) and Holy Spirit come together.

Objectives

- To deepen the candidates understanding of and appreciation for the activity of the Holy Spirit
- To explore the connections between the work of the Spirit and the sacrament of Confirmation
- To explore images of the Holy Spirit

Schedule at a Glance

- Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 minutes)
- Exercise: Life in the Spirit (30 minutes)
- Break (5 minutes)
- Experience the Images and Effects of the Holy Spirit (30 minutes)
- Closing Prayer (20 minutes)

Background Reading

- This session covers chapter 1 of the candidate's handbook.
- For further exploration, check out paragraph numbers 1241 and 2670–2672 of the *Catechism*.
- Scriptural connections: Luke 4:14–21 (the Spirit of the Lord) and Acts 2:1–4 (the coming of the Holy Spirit)

Preparation

Materials Needed

- baptismal candles, one for each candidate
- one large rock
- small twigs, paper, a fire-safe container, and other materials to create a small fire on top of the rock
- scratch paper
- newsprint, dark-color markers, and tape
- wind-related music and the necessary equipment to play it (optional)
- hymnals or songbooks, or a worship aid for closing the prayer service, one for each candidate
- copies of the *CYB* or another Bible, one for each candidate
- candidates' handbooks
- pens or pencils
- prayer space items: the large rock, candles, matches or a lighter, and a Bible

Other Necessary Preparation

- Because the use of a small fire is included in the prayer, you will need to choose an outdoor location where the prayer can be held. You may also wish to assign another adult leader to oversee the fire and be sure it is put out at the end of the service.
- On one table, display items that relate to the movement of air (an electric or hand fan, wind chimes, woodwind and brass instruments, paper airplanes, balloons, streamers, a kite, or a model boat). On another table, display items that relate to fire sources or conductors of light and heat (electricity- or battery-generated lights, votive candles in colored glass holders, or water in clear glass containers placed near a light source). If your facility has a fireplace, consider placing the second table near it and prepare to have a fire burning for the session.

Note: If circumstances force you to limit the number and variety of items for this exercise, be sure you have an electric fan to generate a breeze and a reasonably impressive source of fire, such as a large candle or a fire burning in a fireplace. A space heater provides both warmth and a breeze, but it does not have the symbolic value of an actual flame or fire.

- Post a sheet of newsprint near the items and have one or more dark-color markers available.
- On another sheet of newsprint post the following Scripture references:
 - Luke 1:29–32,35
 - Luke 4:1–2
 - Luke 10:21
 - Luke 4:14–21
 - Luke 24:46,48–49
- Prepare musicians and a cantor to lead the song for the closing prayer or gather necessary recorded music and equipment.
- Select one of the following songs for the closing prayer service:
 - “Envía Tu Espíritu,” by Bob Hurd
 - “Veni Sancte Spiritus,” Taize
 - “Send Us Your Spirit,” by David Haas
 - “Send Down the Fire,” by Marty Haugen

Procedure

Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

1. Warmly greet the candidates and gather them about you. Distribute the candidates’ handbooks, and then offer these comments, which are drawn from chapter 1 of the candidate’s handbook:

- During the reflection sessions, you will explore what it means to make a commitment to Jesus Christ and his Gospel as a fully initiated member of the Catholic Church.
- These sessions begin by focusing on the Holy Spirit, who gives us inspiration, guidance, and strength so that we may live as disciples of Jesus Christ. Then we move on to explore central aspects of the Christian life: prayer, moral living, justice and service, and the celebration of the sacraments.
- These sessions are designed to help you prepare for Confirmation by providing both information and opportunities for prayer and reflection that will shed light on how the Holy Spirit moves in your life and in the Church.
- Every facet of Jesus’s life, ministry, and mission was guided, indeed driven, by the Holy Spirit. But who is this Spirit? And what does it mean to be guided by the Holy Spirit? These questions are the focus of this session.

2. Ask the candidates to open their handbooks to the “Prayer to the Holy Spirit” (also known as the Prayer of Guidance) on page 10. Explain that this is a traditional form of prayer and that it is used in many liturgies and prayer services in which the Holy Spirit is called upon for assistance. Invite the group to make the sign of the cross, and then say the prayer together. Close with another sign of the cross.

Exercise: Life in the Spirit (30 minutes)

1. Begin by offering the following comments, which are drawn from chapter 1 in the candidate's handbook:

- Each divine person of the Trinity—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is the one God; there is only one Godhead. The Holy Spirit is truly God. Through the grace of the Holy Spirit, faith is kindled in us and the new life that comes from God is communicated to us.
- Through the Scriptures and Tradition, we know that the Holy Spirit is one of the three persons of the Trinity. Though he was the last of the three persons to be revealed, he has been active in the world since Creation.
- The Spirit, whom we experience and celebrate in Baptism, the Eucharist, and Confirmation—indeed all the sacraments—is the same Spirit who was present at the creation of the world (see Gen. 1:1–2); the same Spirit who spoke through the prophets of the Old Testament; the same Spirit who came upon Jesus at his baptism (see Luke 3:22) and enabled him to confront and defeat the power of evil during his temptations in the desert (see Luke 4:1–2); the same Spirit of healing love who nourished the sick and hurting at the touch of Jesus; the same Spirit who inspired Jesus to trust in the promises of his Father even as he faced death on the cross; the same Spirit who descended on the Apostles at Pentecost (see Acts 2:2–8); and the same Spirit who has guided the Church toward truth and love over the last two thousand years and enables us to share in the communion of the Holy Trinity.
- The Holy Spirit will continue to be at work with the Father and the Son until the plan for our salvation is complete.
- The Holy Spirit is united with the Father and the Son in an unbreakable bond of love. When the Father sends his Son, he always sends the Spirit. The mission of Jesus Christ and the mission of the Holy Spirit are inseparable, yet their work is distinct.
- It is Jesus we see, a visible image of the invisible God, but it is the Holy Spirit who, while never drawing attention to himself, reveals the Son and the Father. When we pray the Nicene Creed, we confess belief in the Spirit in this way: “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* [italics added].”

2. Invite the candidates to form groups of four or five. Provide each group with a Bible and some scratch paper and a pen for note-taking. Then refer all the candidates to the posted newsprint that lists the various scriptural references from the Gospel of Luke.

3. Ask for one volunteer from each group to read aloud the passages to his or her group. At the conclusion of each reading, ask the groups to discuss the following questions. Possible answers are noted in brackets.

- What actions were signs of the Spirit's presence in Jesus? [healing, freeing, showing compassion, creating, comforting]
- What actions or attitudes show that the Holy Spirit was with him? [The candidates may offer many examples of Jesus's words and actions of compassion.]
- Just before Jesus left his Apostles, what did he ask them to do? [to wait for the coming of God's power from on high]

Point out that the promised power from on high is the Holy Spirit—the same Spirit who was with Jesus throughout his life.

4. Regather in a large group and invite each small group to briefly share their responses to the questions. Conclude this activity by offering the following comments, which are drawn from chapter 1 of the candidate's handbook. Be sure to make connections to the comments the participants shared in the discussion.

- Belief in the Holy Spirit also means believing that the Son of God is present and active in our lives today. When we feel the power of God's forgiveness, sense that he is asking us to do something, speak of his action in our lives today, or see him at work in the lives of other people, it is by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- We are also talking about the presence of the Spirit of God when we speak of the Father giving us gifts or charisms. "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Cor. 12:4–7).
- The Holy Spirit has given each of us gifts and a corresponding challenge, that is, to use them for the sake of others and to build up the Church, the Body of Christ.
- The presence of the Holy Spirit is an amazing gift and a great source of hope for us. Through the Spirit we come to know God's love and open ourselves to its transforming power. The Holy Spirit gives us the assurance that Christ, the Son of God, is always with us.

Break (5 minutes)

Experience the Images and Effects of the Holy Spirit (30 minutes)

1. Ask the candidates whether they can recall the Gospel story of Pentecost—the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles. Invite those who can to name any striking events or physical manifestations of the Spirit that are part of that story. Note that because we have never seen the Holy Spirit, we use images to describe and better understand the presence and action of the Spirit in our lives and in the world.

Prepare the candidates to listen to a reading about Pentecost by instructing them to listen closely for the two images of the Holy Spirit that the writer used. Then take up the group Bible and read Acts 2:1–4.

2. Encourage the candidates to identify from the reading the two images of the Holy Spirit's presence and power: wind and fire. Then suggest that the images of wind and fire can give us hints about the reality and activity of the Holy Spirit.

Invite the candidates to come to the area where you have displayed the items that relate to wind. Ask them to bring their handbooks so they have a surface for writing. Distribute to each candidate a piece of scratch paper and a pen or pencil. Have them make themselves comfortable enough to listen carefully. Explain that the display will help them realize that many items use wind, respond to wind, or require wind to function or live.

Turn on a fan and direct it at the candidates. Consider playing some appropriate background music. (Music stores often have recordings of nature sounds. Also, depending on the weather, you might be able to take advantage of the wind by opening windows and doors to create dramatic air movement.) Instruct the candidates to quiet themselves inside and to look, feel, and listen attentively to what wind does, how it is used, and the varieties of power—gentle or strong—it has.

3. After a minute or two, ask the candidates to quickly jot down as many ideas or insights as they can about how wind symbolizes the work of the Spirit. Their list is for personal reference only.

4. Then direct the candidates' attention to the items you gathered that use, depend on, or relate to fire as a source of light and heat. Point out, for example, that fire creates light to see by and generates heat that warms, melts, and so on. Tell the candidates to open their senses to the items. Ask them to use those items to spark their imagination about other uses of fire.

After a minute or two, again direct the candidates to their scratch paper. Ask them to turn the paper over and record their ideas about how fire symbolizes the work of the Spirit.

5. After the candidates have finished the personal reflection exercises, call for volunteers to offer some of their ideas about how the work of the Spirit is symbolized, first by wind and then by fire. Record all their responses in two columns on newsprint, with the ideas about wind in the first column and the ideas about fire in the second.

The candidates will likely include the following examples, but if not you can use them to prompt further reflection. These comments are drawn from chapter 1 of the candidate's handbook:

- We have never seen the Holy Spirit so we use images to describe and better understand the presence and action of the Spirit in our lives and in the world.
- One common image of the Holy Spirit is derived from the meaning of the term *spirit*. The word *spirit* is the English translation of the Hebrew *ruah* and the Greek *pneuma*, which refer to dynamic unseen forces like wind and breath. Wind can be a gentle, refreshing breeze or a powerful gale capable of reshaping everything in its path.
- Breath means life. Without it we cease to live. When we say the Holy Spirit is like wind or breath, we are saying that the Spirit of God is a dynamic, transforming power and the source of life.
- Other images or symbols of the Holy Spirit include water, fire, oil, a cloud, light, a dove, and a hand.
- Water signifies the life-giving action of the Spirit in Baptism. Jesus likened the Holy Spirit to rivers of living water that flow out of the hearts of believers (see John 7:38).
- Fire signifies the power of the Spirit to transform. Just as fire changes whatever it touches, so, too, does the Spirit of the Lord.
- The ritual of anointing with oil signifies the gift of Christ's loving presence through the Holy Spirit. The name *Christian* comes from *Christ*, meaning "the anointed one."

6. Invite the candidates to offer examples of other images or symbols of the Holy Spirit. Follow up with these comments in your own words:

- The images of a cloud and light symbolize that the Holy Spirit reveals God the Father's presence (like light) but also hides his full glory (like a cloud). These images appear in scriptural accounts such as Jesus's baptism, the Transfiguration, and Jesus's Ascension.
- The dove appears in the Scriptures as a sign of the Father's gift of his Spirit. When Jesus came out of the water after his baptism, the Holy Spirit came down upon him in the form of a dove. That is why Christian art often uses a dove to depict the Holy Spirit.
- Laying or imposing hands on someone is a sign of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures recount that Jesus healed and blessed people by laying his hands on them.

7. Next, invite the candidates to offer examples of how the Holy Spirit is present in the sacraments of the Church. Be sure the discussion includes the following key points, which are drawn from chapter 1 of the candidate's handbook:

- When we celebrate sacraments, we call on the Holy Spirit to be present in our midst. Another word for this special kind of call is *epiclesis*, which is Greek for "invocation." The celebrant, praying on behalf of all the people who are gathered, begs the Father to send the Spirit. Some examples from the sacraments of initiation include:
 - *Baptism.* When blessing the water the celebrant touches it and prays, "We ask you, Father, with your Son to send the Holy Spirit upon the water of this font. May all who are buried with Christ in the death of baptism rise also with him to newness of life" (Rite of Baptism).
 - *The Eucharist.* During the Eucharistic Prayer II, the celebrant prays, "Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray, by sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall, so that they may become for us the Body and Blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ." Later, during the same prayer, he invokes the Spirit again in this prayer for unity: "Humbly we pray that, partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, we may be gathered into one by the Holy Spirit." (*Roman Missal*).
 - *Confirmation.* The bishop prays for the candidates, saying to God the Father, "Send your Holy Spirit upon them to be their Helper and Guide" (Rite of Confirmation, no. 25).
- Our sacramental prayers of invocation share a common theme. We pray not only that the Holy Spirit will be present and change things, such as the bread and wine in the Eucharist, but that the Spirit of God will change us and bring us into greater communion with him and one another so that we might be the Body of Christ in the world.

8. Conclude by telling the candidates that many of these symbols and images will be explored in future sessions.

Optional Journal Activity

Invite the candidates to bring their handbooks to the prayer space. Distribute pens and ask the participants to open their handbooks to the journal-writing exercise, "Born of the Spirit," on page 12. If you wish, play quiet music while they write.

Closing Prayer (20 minutes)

Gather

1. Invite the candidates to gather in the prayer space. Provide each candidate with a hymnal, songbook, or worship aid. Roll the large rock to the center of the room, and place the two pillar candles next to it. Place the fire-safe container with the materials for the fire on top of the rock. Ask the candidates to place their baptismal candles around the rock.

2. Invite the candidates to join in singing the gathering song you selected. As the song concludes, light the fire. Begin prayer in the following manner, inviting the candidates to respond, "Amen":

■ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Listen

3. Proclaim Joel 2:15–17. Allow a few moments of quiet reflection, then invite the candidates to chant "Come, Holy Spirit" six or seven times.

4. As the candidates are chanting, begin proclaiming the second part of the Joel reading (2:18–19).

Respond

5. Break open the word and make connections to the session with these or similar words:

- Christ is the rock upon which our faith rests.
- In Baptism, we received the light of Christ.
- We come to Christ, to be filled with the Holy Spirit, to be guided and strengthened by the Spirit.
- With your baptismal candle, rekindle the flame in this fire as you prepare to celebrate the sacrament of Confirmation.

6. Invite the candidates to come forward one at a time to light their baptismal candles from the fire. As each candidate comes forward, invite all of the candidates to repeat the mantra "Come, Holy Spirit."

Send Forth

7. Conclude with the sign of the cross.

8. Thank the young people for their presence and cooperation, and before dismissing them, make any necessary announcements about the time and location of the next session.

Evaluation

Shortly after leading this session, briefly reflect on the following:

- Note changes you could make that would make leading this session easier or more effective.

- Reflect on your experience with the presentation. Was the presentation too long? too short? How would you change or adjust the presentation to make it more engaging and effective?

- Finally, note any changes you would like to make in your guidance of the closing prayer service. Suggest changes for improving the experience in the future.



Session 2

Prayer: Communion with God

Session Overview

Christian prayer is a continual process of changing and growing and deepening. This growth comes from commitment and discipline and with God's grace. Though practicing prayer with consistency can be difficult, humility and trust in prayer are key factors in deepening one's relationship with God through prayer. Recognizing as well as focusing on God will continue to bring richness to the life of the faithful person. This session will help the candidates identify ways to deepen their personal prayer life.

Importantly, our focus in this session is on the actual practice of prayer, rather than simply on what Catholics believe about it.

Objectives

- To help the candidates appreciate the central importance of personal prayer in the life of the Christian
- To introduce the candidates to practical prayer techniques that they might use in their daily life
- To encourage the candidates to establish daily prayer practices

Schedule at a Glance

- Welcome and Introduction (10 minutes)
- Prayer Postures (15 minutes)
- Exercise in Prayer (30 minutes)
- Break (5 minutes)
- Presentation: Daily Prayer Practices (10 minutes)
- Closing Prayer (20 minutes)

Background Reading

- This session covers chapter 2 of the candidate's handbook.
- For further exploration, check out paragraph numbers 2559–2567 and 2700–2724 of the *Catechism*.
- Scriptural connections: Ps. 46:10 (Be still and know that I am God.), Ps. 77:11–12 (I will meditate on all your works.), and Mark 6:30–32 (Jesus and the disciples rest for a while.)

Preparation

Materials Needed

- newsprint, markers, and masking tape
- several copies of resource 1, “Exercises of Simple Awareness”
- hymnals or songbooks, or a worship aid for the closing prayer service, one for each participant
- copies of the *CYB* or another Bible, one for each candidate
- candidates' handbooks
- pens or pencils
- prayer space items: the large rock, candles, matches or a lighter, and a Bible

Other Necessary Preparation

- On newsprint write the following definition:
 - “[Prayer is] the elevation of the mind and heart to God in praise of his glory; a petition made to God for some desired good, or in thanksgiving for a good received, or in intercession for others before God. Through prayer the Christian experiences a communion with God through Christ in the Church” (*Catechism*, p. 894).
- Review and make copies of resource 1, “Exercises of Simple Awareness.” Cut apart the resource as scored.
- Determine where each prayer experience might take place. You may also wish to designate an adult leader to facilitate each prayer experience for each small group.
- Select one of the following songs for the closing prayer service:
 - “Lead Me, Guide Me,” by Doris Akers
 - “Standing in the Need of Prayer,” African-American spiritual
 - “O Lord, Hear My Prayer,” Taize Community
- Prepare musicians and a cantor to lead the song for the closing prayer, or gather the necessary recorded music and equipment.

Procedure

Welcome and Introduction (10 minutes)

1. Warmly welcome the candidates and any other participants. Then share the following thoughts, which are drawn from chapter 2 of the candidate's handbook.

- Our focus in this session is the Catholic practice without which none of the other elements of a Christian life is possible—the practice of prayer. It is so important because through prayer, the Holy Spirit unites us to Jesus Christ and transforms our hearts.
- Every session in this program will include one or more experiences of group or communal prayer. But here our concern is the kind of prayer we must practice in our *personal* life if we hope to grow in our experience of and relationship with God.

2. Continue by explaining that prayer is such a diverse and complex reality, covering so many possible forms and styles that you want to start this session by providing a basic working definition of prayer. At this point, reveal the poster with the definition of prayer. Then comment on the definition, which is drawn from chapter 2 of the candidate's handbook:

- Prayer is a relationship. It is God's action through the Holy Spirit and it is our response. Here's how the American edition of the *Catechism* defines prayer in its glossary:

[Prayer is] the elevation of the mind and heart to God in praise of his glory; a petition made to God for some desired good, or in thanksgiving for a good received, or in intercession for others before God. Through prayer the Christian experiences a communion with God through Christ in the Church. (P. 894)

- The Holy Spirit teaches us how to pray and is like living water that wells up within us when we pray. The "Spirit is offered us at all times, in the events of *each day*, to make prayer spring up from us" (*Catechism*, no. 2659).
- We are religious beings by nature and vocation. That is, we come to know God the Father, Jesus Christ his Son, and the Holy Spirit because God first knows us: "We love because [God] first loved us" (1 John 4:19).
- God wants to be in relationship with you in every aspect of your life—in all your concerns, gifts, faults, and feelings. This gives rise to different forms of prayer—adoration, contrition, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, and praise—that connect to different times and situations in your life.
 - *Adoration*. The first commandment says we acknowledge God alone as Creator and Savior and worship him alone as the source of all blessings in our lives. Prayers of adoration confirm our commitment to God's primacy in our lives.
 - *Contrition*. When we are contrite, we are apologetic. Prayers of contrition are our quiet moments with God to express our sorrow for anything that may have taken us away from him.
 - *Petition*. To petition is to make a request. We ask God for something we need. When we pray in this manner, we express an awareness of our relationship with God and our absolute need for him.
 - *Intercession*. This is a type of petitionary prayer that focuses on other people instead of ourselves. We ask God for something for someone else. We pray for friends and loved ones as well as enemies. We also pray for people we don't

know, especially those in need of food, shelter, and companionship and all who are suffering.

- *Thanksgiving*. This is a prayer of gratitude for all that God has given us. Saint Paul emphasized its importance: “Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thess. 5:18). Our most full expression of thanksgiving occurs in the celebration of the Eucharist.
- *Praise*. A prayer of praise is a joyful expression inspired by our love for God. Our focus, however, is not on something God has done for us. Rather, we praise and extol God simply because HE IS. We can praise in song, in dance, in word, and in actions.

3. Conclude your opening comments with the following story, preferably in your own words and without the use of notes:

■ Once a boy came to a holy man who knew much about prayer. The boy asked the holy man to teach him how to pray. So it was agreed. The boy came late the first day. The second day he skipped. The third day he came late again.

The holy man led the boy to the edge of a creek and told him to put his face underwater and leave it there as long as he could. After a short while, the boy pulled his face out of the water, gasping for air.

The master said: “When you want to pray as much as you want to breathe the fresh air, then you will be ready. But first you’ve got to want to pray.”

(This story is from Yvette Nelson, *Praying*, p. 3.)

Prayer Postures (15 minutes)

1. Tell the candidates that it is possible to pray anywhere at anytime and about virtually anything. Some approaches to prayer work well when we have just a minute in the midst of a busy day. Later in this session, you will offer some suggestions on how the candidates might do that. First, you want to teach techniques for entering into deeper and richer experiences of prayer called meditation and contemplation. Offer a brief overview as follows:

■ One prayer form that is particularly helpful is called meditation. Meditation engages our thought, emotion, imagination, and desire in seeking a deeper union with God.

Explain that the first step in preparing for prayer is to relax the body and free it from the tensions that can distract us during our time of prayer. Ask the candidates to find a spot in the room where they can either sit or lie down in a comfortable position without touching anyone else. Give the candidates a minute to settle into their spot before continuing.

2. Walk the candidates through each prayer posture in the following list, allowing time for them to try each one. You may need to ask for a volunteer to demonstrate and invite the candidates to follow along.

■ Kneel with your back straight and your hands folded in front of your body, resting on something—a chair, a couch, or a pew—to give support and balance.

■ Kneel with your body relaxed and your buttocks resting on the heels of your feet, your back straight, your head upright, and your hands resting on the thighs.

■ Sit in a firm, straight-backed chair, keeping your upper body erect, and your feet together and placed firmly on the floor and your hands gently resting on your lap. Some people prefer sitting on the edge of the chair.