

A High School Confirmation Program

saint mary's press

Anointed in the Spirit

Candidate
Handbook

Rita Burns Senseman

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Welcome to *Anointed in the Spirit*

An Invitation

This is an invitation to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation. You are invited to complete your Christian initiation by receiving a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit. High school can be very busy, but you'll find this Confirmation preparation program, *Anointed in the Spirit*, to be worth your time and effort.

God created you in his image through love, and he continues to love you. God is always calling you to communion with him and wants you to find happiness. Celebrating Confirmation strengthens your relationship with God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—and helps you to live the life of faith.

About This Handbook

This book has been created to make your preparation for Confirmation enjoyable, fruitful, and memorable. Here is what you will find in this book:

A Walk through the Sacrament of Confirmation

The chapters of this book introduce the central aspects of the Confirmation liturgy and explore the meaning of the Sacrament. The material will help you to deepen your understanding of God's call to you to live a life of faith and to explore the significance of being confirmed Catholic.

Special Features

Each chapter includes a number of special features designed to enhance your preparation:

Jesus Connection

The “Jesus Connection” features help you to deepen your understanding of Jesus Christ and how he is central to our faith and to the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Lord, Hear My Prayer

The “Lord, Hear My Prayer” features offer short prayers to pray on your own and with others during the preparation sessions.

Did You Know?

The “Did You Know?” features explore topics related to your faith and Confirmation that complement the main chapter material.

Catholic Connection

The “Catholic Connection” features help you to review some of the central teachings of the Church.

Living as a Disciple

The “Living as a Disciple” features invite you to reflect on the ways you live your life every day as a disciple of Jesus Christ, who is filled with the Holy Spirit.

A graphic featuring the text "Jesus Connection" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The text is set against a white background that is part of a larger, textured, dark grey and black background on the right side of the page. The background has a vertical, wavy, mesh-like pattern.A graphic featuring the text "Lord, Hear My Prayer" in a light grey, sans-serif font. The text is set against a white background that is part of a larger, textured, dark grey and black background on the right side of the page. The background has a vertical, wavy, mesh-like pattern.A graphic featuring the text "Did You Know?" in a light grey, sans-serif font. The text is set against a white background that is part of a larger, textured, dark grey and black background on the right side of the page. The background has a vertical, wavy, mesh-like pattern.A graphic featuring the text "Catholic Connection" in a light grey, sans-serif font. The text is set against a white background that is part of a larger, textured, dark grey and black background on the right side of the page. The background has a vertical, wavy, mesh-like pattern.A graphic featuring the text "Living as a Disciple" in a light grey, sans-serif font. The text is set against a white background that is part of a larger, textured, dark grey and black background on the right side of the page. The background has a vertical, wavy, mesh-like pattern.



Journaling

Scripture Quotations

Right from the Rite

This feature presents quotations from *The Order of Confirmation* and other rites of the Church. A rite is an official liturgical celebration.

Journaling

Each chapter ends with a journal page that includes suggestions for ongoing, deeper reflection. If your leader or catechist doesn't invite you to complete these pages during your sessions, you can complete them on your own.

Scripture Quotations

Quotations from Sacred Scripture are found throughout this book. These quotations will help you to see some of the connections between the Scriptures and topics addressed in the program.

Catholic Prayers and Beliefs

At the end of this handbook, you will find a handy collection of prayers and summaries of Catholic beliefs and practices in two separate appendixes.

Saints

Another feature you will find at the end of the book is a list of saints. The list is organized according to causes and groups. These are the special causes or groups of people the saints have been linked to in the Church's tradition. Also included are the saints' feast days. This list may be helpful if you consider choosing a new name for Confirmation (see "Your Confirmation Name" in this introduction).

Overview of the Preparation Program

Every parish does Confirmation preparation a little bit differently, but here are several activities you may be invited to participate in beyond preparation sessions with your fellow candidates:

- orientation sessions for parents, sponsors, and candidates
- conversations with your sponsor
- a retreat
- a celebration of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation
- activities that promote justice or provide a service to people in need
- a rehearsal for Confirmation

Your leader or catechist will provide detailed information about your parish's program. He or she will also talk to you about choosing a sponsor and a Confirmation name.

Your Confirmation Sponsor

Choosing a Confirmation sponsor is an important decision for candidates. Spend some time thinking about whom you will choose, praying about your choice, and talking with a parent.


If feasible, your sponsor for Confirmation should be one of your godparents from Baptism. This helps to show the close relationship between your Baptism and your Confirmation. Plus, it makes sense because your godparents have made a commitment to help and support you in your Christian life. And that's exactly what a Confirmation sponsor does. A Confirmation sponsor helps and supports you in being a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ.

You do, however, have the option of choosing someone other than a godparent. The Church says a Confirmation sponsor is a person who . . .

- is at least sixteen years of age (unless your diocese has established a different age)



You are part of the Communion of Saints. What binds you to this community?

- 
- has been confirmed and has received the Eucharist
 - is a practicing Catholic in good standing with the Church

Here are a few questions that may help you choose your Confirmation sponsor:

- If both godparents are available to sponsor you, is one of them a better choice for a Confirmation sponsor?
- Is the person a good role model for the Catholic way of life?
- Does the person have time to spend with you as you prepare for Confirmation? Is he or she available to come to the rehearsal and the celebration of Confirmation? (Even if the person can't come, he or she might still be a good sponsor. Check with your leader or catechist about this.)
- Would you feel comfortable talking about your faith with this person?

If you have any questions, talk to your catechist or the leader of your preparation program.

Your Confirmation Name

When you are confirmed, the bishop will say, "*your name*," be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit" (*The Order of Confirmation*, 27). There are two main practices regarding the name the bishop will say. The first is to use your baptismal name. The second is to select a new name. Your catechist or program leader will provide guidance about your options.

Baptismal Name

During your preparation for Confirmation, you will hear a lot about the close relationship between Baptism and Confirmation. You will learn that Confirmation completes the process of initiation that was begun in Baptism. You will also learn that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation perfects the grace you received in Baptism. When Confirmation candidates are confirmed using their baptismal names, the close connection between Baptism and Confirmation is highlighted.

New Name

In some parishes and dioceses, candidates have the option of selecting new names for Confirmation or using their baptismal names. If you consider selecting a new name, a good approach is to choose the name of a saint or a holy person whose life inspires you to live faithfully. This name can be a symbol of what you will strive for in your life as a confirmed Catholic.

Now that you know more about *Anointed in the Spirit*, it's time to get started. The chapters that follow will support you on the exciting journey leading to the celebration of Confirmation and beyond.



Your Confirmation sponsor is a role model who guides you in the Catholic way of life and someone you can talk to about your faith. Who would be a good sponsor?

1

Being a Candidate



Think about the various elections held early in the year at school for positions such as class offices, student council representatives, and yes, the annual election for homecoming queen and king. These elections mean that there are candidates for the various positions. Maybe you've even been a candidate for student council, class treasurer, drama club president, or some other office. Whether you've been a candidate or supported a candidate, you probably realize that being a candidate is pretty important.

Why is being a candidate so important? A candidate is a person who is being considered for a significant position, award, or honor. Perhaps you've had a coach who was a candidate for a coach-of-the-year award or a friend who was a candidate for a science award. If you are a candidate for something, then chances are it's pretty significant. And that's the case here because you are a candidate for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Like most worthwhile things in life, being a candidate involves effort and comes with some responsibilities. For example, if you are a candidate for student council president then you must be willing to work hard to represent the students of your school. If you want to be elected, you need to campaign and let people know who you are and what you intend to do.

Being a candidate for the Sacrament of Confirmation is different though, because you don't campaign and you

don't have to be voted in or elected. God has already elected or chosen you through Baptism. Any baptized person who reaches the appropriate age can and should become a candidate for Confirmation. Everyone is encouraged to be confirmed, because without Confirmation a person's Christian initiation is incomplete. Confirmation adds to the gift of new life we receive in Baptism. It perfects baptismal grace by deepening the Gift of the Holy Spirit we receive in Baptism.

Your Confirmation Candidacy

When you are a candidate for Confirmation, you are in a period of preparation for receiving the Sacrament. You have a special place in the Church, and your parish community has a responsibility to help you get ready for Confirmation.



Living as a Disciple

Your First Responsibility

With any candidacy come certain responsibilities. Now that you are a candidate for Confirmation, your responsibility is to prepare yourself for the celebration of the Sacrament. What will you do to prepare?

What the Parish Promises

Here are some things the parish promises to help you with while you are preparing for Confirmation:

- developing a closer relationship with God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit
- becoming more familiar with the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in your life
- gaining a stronger sense of belonging to the Church—your parish as well as the worldwide or universal Church
- developing a greater capability to serve others and contribute to the Church’s mission

Be assured that members of your parish will also be praying for you and providing examples of what it means to be a community of disciples of Jesus Christ.



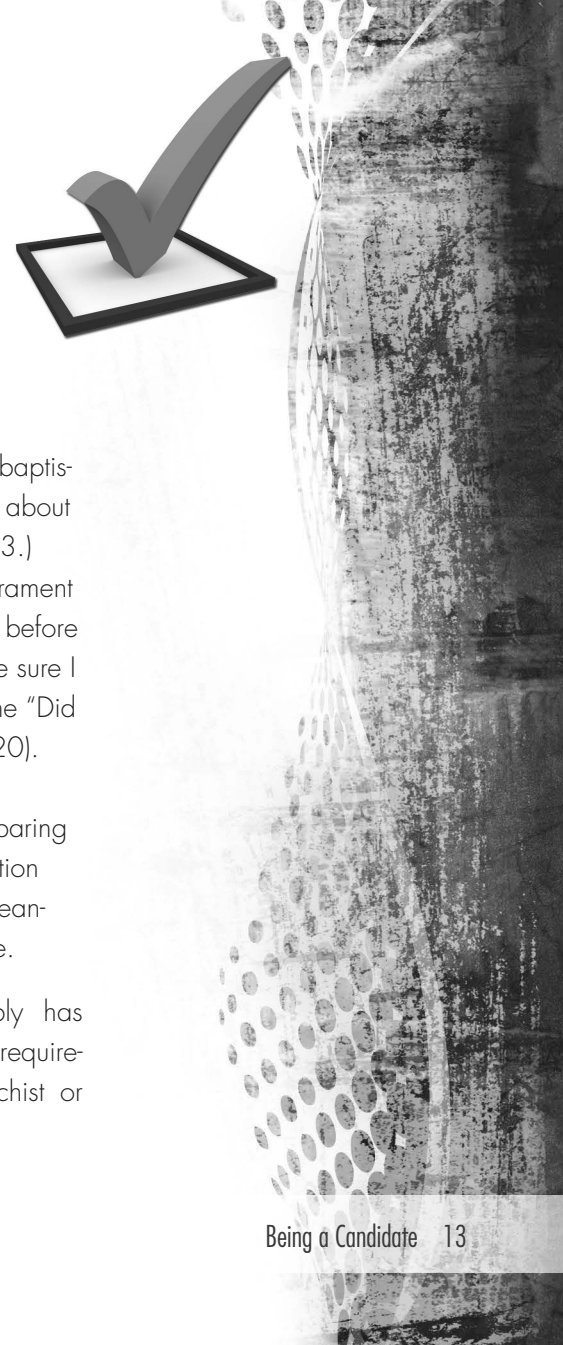
The Church stands with you as you prepare for Confirmation. How might members of your parish help you along the way?

What *Is* Asked of You

Even though candidates for Confirmation do not campaign, the Church does ask that you be prepared and that you meet certain requirements. Here's a checklist of guidelines:

A Candidate's Checklist

- I am a baptized Catholic.
 - I have not been confirmed before.
 - I am over the age of seven (or other age set by my bishop).
 - I want to live as a disciple of Christ and be a witness to the Christian way of life for others.
 - I am willing to seek guidance about the Christian life from my Confirmation sponsor.
 - I want to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation and complete my initiation into the Church, which began with my Baptism.
 - I am willing to pray more often in order to be better prepared to receive the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation.
 - I am capable of renewing my baptismal promises. (We'll talk more about baptismal promises in chapter 3.)
 - I am willing to receive the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation before receiving Confirmation to make sure I am in the state of grace (see the "Did You Know?" feature on page 20).
 - I attend Mass regularly.
 - I am willing to spend time preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation and learning more about its meaning and significance for my life.
- Your parish or diocese probably has some additional guidelines or requirements, so check with your catechist or parish leader.





Right from the Rite

Those who have been baptized continue on the path of Christian Initiation through the Sacrament of Confirmation, by which they receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, whom the Lord sent upon the Apostles at Pentecost.

(The Order of Confirmation, 1)

What God Promises

First and foremost, God promises love. Because he loves us, God has revealed to us that he is one God in three Persons: the Trinity. This is the central mystery of Christianity. The three divine Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—are completely in union with one another, and their love flows out to us. God has given himself to us and calls us to share in the love and life of the Trinity.

God desires that we will respond to his Revelation with faith. Faith is first of all a gift from God. Someone cannot have faith without the Holy Spirit, who helps us see our need for God. Being free to choose our response to this gift is part of our nature as humans. Being faithful is possible when someone understands and freely chooses to believe in God and his Church. Our salvation depends on our faith.

Having faith means that we believe. Believing is also an act of the entire Church. Don't confuse Church—with a capital C—with a building. The Church is the community of faithful people who put their faith in Jesus Christ. It is the Church that teaches you. It is the Church that is a role model for you. It is the Church that supports and nourishes your own faith.

One part of a faith-filled response to God is to complete your initiation into the Church by being confirmed. Through the waters of



Study this symbol.
Why is it a good
representation of the
Holy Trinity?

Baptism and the action of the Holy Spirit, we become members of Christ's Body, the Church. God continues to call us throughout our lives to deepen our relationship with him and strengthen our bond with the Church.

In the Sacrament of Confirmation, there is a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon those being confirmed. Through the action of the Holy Spirit, the Father, united with Christ, accomplishes great things for us:

- Our relationship with the Father grows deeper.
- We are united more firmly with Jesus Christ.
- The Gifts of the Holy Spirit increase in us.
- Our connection with the Church increases, and we are better able to continue the Church's mission.
- The Holy Spirit gives us a special strength to be witnesses to the Christian way of life through what we say and what we do.

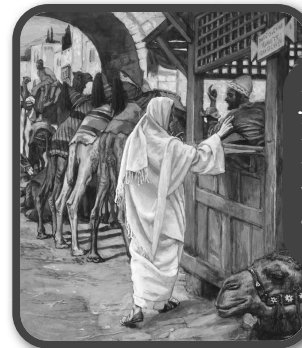
And, rest assured, God always keeps his promises. So even if you don't fulfill all your responsibilities and commitments or do all the things you say you'll do, God will always do what he says because God's promises are trustworthy and eternal.

We do not have to earn God's gifts. All of God's gifts are freely given, including the grace of Confirmation. "Earning" Confirmation is not at all the point of spending some time in preparation as a candidate for Confirmation. The time of preparation is meant to help candidates be receptive to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. God calls each of us at all times and pours out his love upon us. The challenge for us is to recognize his love and his call and to respond with faithful living.

Called by God

The Scriptures are filled with accounts of people who heard God's call and responded with faith. Here are a few of those people and the verses where you can read about them.

Biblical People	Scripture Verses
Abraham	Genesis 12:1-9
Moses	Exodus 3:1-12
Samuel	1 Samuel 3:1-10
Isaiah	Isaiah 6:1-8
Jeremiah	Jeremiah 1:4-10
Mary	Luke 1:26-38
The First Disciples	Matthew 4:18-22
Matthew	Matthew 9:9-13
The Samaritan Woman	John 4:4-42
Saul	Acts of the Apostles 9:1-19



Jesus approached Matthew at his tax collection booth, saying, "Follow me."



Right from the Rite

One of the highest responsibilities of the People of God is to prepare the baptized to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. (*The Order of Confirmation, 3*)

Candidates for Sacraments

You and your peers who are Confirmation candidates are most likely not the only candidates in your parish responding to God's call by preparing for initiation Sacraments. Parents of babies are preparing to present them for Baptism, and children are getting ready for First Communion. Adults who didn't complete their initiation when they were young might now be seeking Confirmation. Catechumens, both adults and children older than seven, are seeking to join the Church and are candidates for all three Sacraments of Christian Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist.

There is also another type of candidate for the Sacraments of Christian Initiation. These people are candidates for reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church. These candidates are already baptized, but not as Catholics. They are Christian and might be Methodist, Baptist, Lutheran, or Episcopalian, for example. When these kinds of baptized candidates join the Catholic Church, they make a profession of faith and usually receive Confirmation and the Eucharist during the same liturgy.

Whether a person is young or old, baptized or unbaptized, Catholic already or just becoming Catholic, Confirmation is an essential part of becoming a full member of the Catholic Church.

Let's turn now from the different types of candidates and take a look at your Confirmation candidacy.

The Seven Sacraments

Confirmation is one of the Church's Seven Sacraments. The other six are Baptism, the Eucharist, Penance and Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony.

The Sacraments bring us face to face with God. We don't literally "see" God in a visual way, but we know he is with us and loves us. We call this relationship with God grace. We encounter grace most fully in the Sacraments. Through grace we participate in God's divine life, the life of the Trinity. It is pure love between the Father and the Son poured out to us by the Holy Spirit. When we celebrate the Sacraments with the required disposition, an attitude of openness to God's love, we are able to recognize his presence more clearly. The Sacraments truly make present the graces that they signify. For example, in Baptism, the person really becomes a new creation.

The Sacraments are gifts from Christ, who instituted them. The Gospels show us how he established the meaning of each Sacrament and commissioned his disciples to celebrate them.

The Sacraments fall into three categories:

1. **Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist** are the Sacraments of Christian Initiation because they are the foundation of Christian life. Baptism is celebrated first because it makes us members of Christ and part of the Church (John 3:5 and Matthew 28:19). Confirmation strengthens us and is necessary to complete baptismal grace (Acts of the Apostles 8:14–17). The Eucharist nourishes us with Christ's Body and Blood and completes Christian initiation. It is the high point of Christian life and all the Sacraments are oriented toward it (Matthew 26:26–28; Mark 14:22–24; Luke 22:14–20; and John, chapter 6).
2. **Anointing of the Sick and Penance and Reconciliation** are the Sacraments of Healing because through them the Church continues Jesus' mission to heal and forgive sins (James 5:14–15 and John 20:22–23).
3. **Holy Orders and Matrimony** are the Sacraments at the Service of Communion. These Sacraments contribute to the Church's mission primarily through service to others (Matthew 16:18–19; Matthew 28:19–20; Mark 3:14–19; Matthew 19:1–15; and John 2:1–11).



Jesus Connection

Jesus of Nazareth

It was Jesus of Nazareth, son of Joseph and Mary, who called Zacchaeus down from the tree. Jesus wasn't just an ordinary guy passing through Jericho, even though he may have looked like one. He had a human nature, like ours. He experienced pain, joy, loneliness, and love. He laughed and cried. He went through childhood, adolescence, and all the periods of human development, like us. We can imagine him as a youth hanging out with friends and learning carpentry from Joseph.

Jesus is fully human, like all of us, except he did not sin. But there is much more to understanding Jesus' identity. He is a divine Person, the second Person of the Trinity, who took on a human nature. That doesn't mean he is half man and half God. "He became truly man while remaining truly God. Jesus Christ is true God and true man" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* [CCC], 464).

Confirmation during the Teen Years

Most Confirmation candidates in the United States celebrated Baptism as babies and the Eucharist at around age seven or grade two, and then celebrate Confirmation during the middle school or high school years. The celebration follows the Order of Confirmation, which is what the Church calls the official Confirmation ceremony. The *Anointed in the Spirit* program will help you prepare by walking you through various parts of the Order of Confirmation and helping you explore its rich meaning and significance. Our walk-through begins in this chapter with the Presentation of the Candidates.

Presentation of the Candidates

Confirmation is normally celebrated within the Mass. This helps to show the connection between Confirmation and the other two Sacraments of Christian Initiation, Baptism and the Eucharist. Whether celebrated within or outside of the Mass, however, there is a celebration of the Word, called the Liturgy of the Word. Hearing the Word is important because the Holy Spirit flows out among all the people gathered and makes God's will known in their lives.

After the proclamation of the Gospel, the Order of Confirmation itself begins with the Presentation of the Candidates. The bishop sits down instead of immediately beginning the homily, and the candidates are then presented to him by a leader in the community, such as a priest, deacon, or catechist.

Called by Name

Each candidate is called by name, if possible. As the priest, deacon, or catechist calls out a person's name, she or he stands, but if the group is large, calling each individual name may not be feasible. If each person is not called by name, all the candidates stand before the bishop as a group. Even though individual names may not be called aloud, there is great meaning in being called by name. Let's take a closer look.

How many times a day do you hear your name called? Christopher! Samantha! Jacob! Jessica! Who calls you by name? Your mom? your dad? your friends? your teacher? your boss? your coach? Hearing your name called means something's up. Your friend is trying to tell you what's going on tonight, or your algebra teacher wants you to answer a question. Your mom wants you to hurry up and get in the car, or your boss wants you to come to work early. Your coach wants you to get to the ball faster, or maybe your grandmother just wants you to know she loves you.

When the Church calls you by name, it means God is calling you. Being called by name is direct, personal, and hard to ignore. You are called out, singled out of the crowd. You are not just part of the pack anymore. God invites you personally into an intimate relationship.

Remember when Jesus was in Jericho and called Zacchaeus, the tax collector, by name (Luke 19:1–10). Zacchaeus was part of a big crowd, watching Jesus from a distance when he climbed a tree so he could get a better view. Then, when Jesus approached, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called out his name. It was up to

When he reached the place, Jesus looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house.” (Luke 19:5)



Jesus singled out Zacchaeus in a compelling, personal way, calling him by name. Through the Church, God calls you by name in Confirmation.

Did You Know?

The State of Grace

Grace is the gift of God's loving presence in our lives. It is the help he gives us through the Holy Spirit to participate in God's life. God wants us to be with him. At Baptism we receive the life of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit breathes love into us. This gift of grace draws us into close relationship with God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and gives us the help we need to become God's adopted sons and daughters.

The Church says that you must be in the “state of grace” to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. Nothing we can do will ever stop God from loving us. When we talk about being in the state of grace, we mean being open to God's gift and responding to God's call. It doesn't mean perfect living, free from all sin every day. Rather, being in the state of grace is to be free from serious sin, the kind that turns us away from God and shows that we have

rejected his love. These kinds of sins are called mortal sins because they bring spiritual death. Less serious sins are called venial sins.

Before receiving Confirmation, the Church asks that you receive the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. Through this Sacrament, God forgives your sins. Even if you haven't committed any serious sins, the Sacrament is important for your life. The grace of the Sacrament strengthens our relationship with God and the Church and helps us resist our tendency to sin. The Sacrament helps to prepare Confirmation candidates to receive, with open hearts and minds, the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

When you receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, God's own self will be poured out through the Holy Spirit, and you will be filled with the gift of God's loving presence even more than you already are!

Zacchaeus to respond to Jesus' call, and because he did, his encounter with Jesus transformed his life.

When God calls each of us, it is personal. He wants us to respond, and he gives us the grace that enables us to do so.

Standing before the Bishop

So there you'll be, called by name and standing before the bishop. The bishop is the minister of Confirmation. (We'll talk more about him in chapter 6.)

After you've been called, the bishop will give the homily, during which he'll explain the Scripture readings and talk about the meaning of Confirmation.

After the homily, the bishop will ask you some questions, but that's for the next chapter. For now let's concentrate on what it means to be a candidate.

Being a Candidate

A candidate is a person preparing for an important role, responsibility, office, or position. You've been called by God to be a candidate and prepare for Confirmation. It's a significant moment in your life, and you'll want to take it seriously. But don't be overwhelmed by what you are being asked to do. Accept and enjoy all the special support from your parish, your sponsor, and your family as you prepare to be confirmed. Remember, Confirmation is a once-in-a-lifetime celebration. Do everything you can to prepare well!

Lord, Hear My Prayer

O God,

You call all people of the earth to yourself.

You have called me to be a candidate for Confirmation.

Help me to answer your call by gladly fulfilling the responsibilities of my candidacy and by being the best candidate I can possibly be.

I pray that during this time I'll deepen my relationship with you and your Son, Jesus Christ.

I pray that the Holy Spirit will help me and guide me in all I do. Amen.

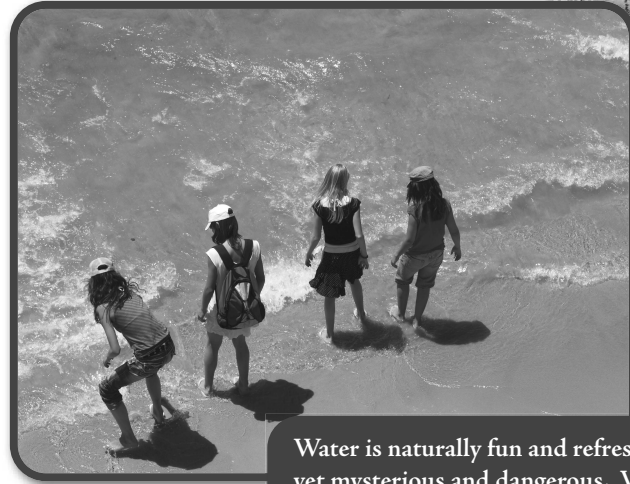
Responding to the Call

You probably hear your name called several times a day, but God's call is a bit different. God is calling you to the Sacrament of Confirmation and to a life of Christian discipleship. Read about some of the people from the Bible listed in the "Called by God" feature on page 15. Ask yourself what meaning this story has for your life and then record insights from the Scripture passages that may help you to be a faithful disciple.

2

Baptism: Waters of New Life

What comes to your mind when you think about water—summer days at the lake, the pond at Grandpa’s farm, gulping from your water bottle after a hard practice, a hot shower, walking along the seashore, swimming with friends, washing the car? Maybe some less positive things come to mind too, like devastating floods, thunderstorms with hail and high winds, hurricanes, and stories of people drowning or getting caught in strong currents?



Water is naturally fun and refreshing, yet mysterious and dangerous. What makes water so intriguing?

Water Brings Life and Death

First, let’s consider the positive and reflect on water as a source of life. It refreshes, renews, and sustains us. It’s in most everything we drink and eat, from sports drinks and smoothies to apple slices and bowls of pasta. We cook, bathe, and clean with it. We swim and play in it. You probably know that approximately two-thirds of the human body is made up of water and that approximately 70 percent of the earth’s surface is covered with water. Indeed, we’re not exaggerating when we

Flood waters can wipe out everything, even life itself. Imagine how the family living here would start anew. In what way are baptismal waters like flood waters?

say that water is central to life and absolutely essential for our very survival.

At the same time, water can bring fear, destruction, and even death. Thousands of people die each year in swimming, boating, and drowning accidents. In October 2012, Hurricane Sandy destroyed thousands of lives and homes from the Caribbean to Canada. Floods, tsunamis, and cyclones kill people and wipe out crops, homes, and businesses all over the world. If you live in a flood



zone or near a coastline, then you may know firsthand the devastation that water can bring.

Water can be terrifying, but at the same time it can be utterly magnificent and extremely pleasant. A white sandy beach with the sun setting over the water is a glorious sight, but that same water could take your life or easily wipe out an oceanfront property.

Water brings us delight, refreshment, and even life itself, but it also can bring death and destruction. The waters of Baptism do the same, bringing about both life and death. In Baptism the water is a sacramental symbol that signifies what God does in the Sacrament. By the power of the Holy Spirit, God gives us new life in Christ and makes us a new creation. We are born anew and made members of Christ's Body, the Church.

Baptismal waters are also associated with death and destruction. Through Baptism the Holy Spirit destroys sin and death. By the power of the Holy Spirit,

the waters of Baptism wash away all sins, both Original Sin and personal sin, as well as the punishment for sin.

Taking a Closer Look at Baptism

In all likelihood, you were baptized as a baby, because in the Catholic Church most people are baptized as infants. Since the early Church, Baptism has been celebrated with young children. We don't wait to baptize at an older age because we don't need to do anything to earn it. God's love is a pure gift to us. Nothing we could do at any age would make us more deserving of this gift than we already are at birth. The Church baptizes children in the faith of the Church with the hope that, as members of God's family, they will learn to love and respond to God.

If you were a baby or young child when you were baptized, ask your family to tell you about your Baptism. Reflecting on your Baptism and its meaning is a helpful step in preparing for Confirmation. Baptism is the gateway to the Christian life and comes first among all the Sacraments. Let's try to imagine what your Baptism was like and explore its meaning.

The Parish Welcomes the Children

First, try to imagine the place you were baptized. Most likely, you were baptized in a church, and it might have been the same church you attend today. Picture yourself arriving at the place of Baptism.



Right from the Rite

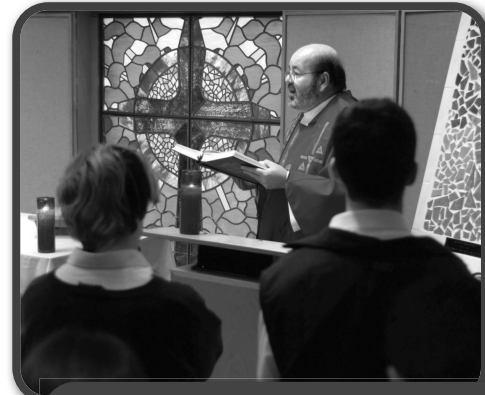
Dear brothers and sisters, you know that God graciously bestows his abundant life through the sacrament of water on those who believe. Let us then raise our minds to him, and with one heart pray that he may be pleased to pour out his grace from this font upon these chosen ones. (*The Order of Baptism of Children*, 53)



Envision your parents, your godmother and godfather, and maybe even your grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, all coming to church with you. Or maybe it's just you and your mom and a godparent arriving for your Baptism. Imagine your family waiting for the priest to come and greet you.

One of the first things that would have happened at your Baptism is that the priest would have asked some questions, and the first one is pretty basic. In chapter 1, we already talked about the importance of being called by name. Well, the first question asked at Baptism is "What name do you give your child?" Naming a person is so incredibly important that the Church makes it the first part of the baptismal rite. Your parents are taking a big step when they present you to the community, and the parish happily receives you by name. This signifies that God is claiming you to be his own—by name.

The priest also asks the parents what they are asking on behalf of their child. The parents reply, "Baptism," "faith," or



At Baptism, Confirmation, and every other Sacrament, the proclamation of the Word is central. Why is that?

something similar. Then the priest briefly reviews the parents' responsibilities for training their child in the practice of the faith and raising him or her to love God and neighbor. He then asks if they understand and asks the godparents if they are ready to help your parents. Next, the priest traces the cross on your forehead and then invites your parents and godparents to do the same. This signifies your new life in Christ and your new identity as a Christian.

The Word of God at Baptism

After the welcoming and the signing with the cross comes the Liturgy of the Word. At Baptisms—and at all sacramental celebrations—the proclamation of God’s Word and the homily are very important. Throughout our lives, the hearing of God’s Word helps us better recognize his love for us and keeps the faith of the Church alive.

Next come the Prayers of the Faithful. The community’s prayers on the day of your Baptism included prayers for you, your family, and your friends. They may have called on and remembered the saints. A prayer called the Litany of Saints is often prayed or sung during Baptism. The litany asks the saints to pray for us.

Prayer of Exorcism and Anointing

After the Liturgy of the Word, there is a special prayer, called an exorcism, asking God to free you from sin, followed by an anointing.

Prayer of Exorcism

An exorcism is a prayer for freedom from evil and the power of Satan, its instigator. The sin and evil in our world touch even a pure and innocent young child. So the priest prays that a child being baptized will be freed from Original Sin (see the “Did You Know?” feature on page 28) and asks God to send the Holy Spirit to dwell with her or him.

An Anointing

Did you know that Baptism can include two anointings with oil? The first is optional, so the priest can omit it if he chooses. If he includes it, after the prayer of exorcism he asks Christ to strengthen the child and anoints him or her on the chest with blessed oil, called the oil of catechumens. You may recall from chapter 1 that a catechumen is a person who is preparing for the Sacrament of Baptism. You may have noticed that the Church uses various sacred oils. Anointing with oil is a rich and ancient tradition that will be discussed more thoroughly in chapter 6.



Did You Know?

Original Sin

Every person but Jesus and Mary was conceived with Original Sin, which is a sinful condition that is part of fallen human nature. But how can a baby who never committed a sin have Original Sin, and where does it come from?

Adam and Eve, the first humans, were at peace with God and every other living thing, at first. Despite their happiness, they made the mistake of thinking they could be happy without God, and they disobeyed him. Because of their sinful choice, they lost their original holiness, and this consequence affects the whole human race—except Jesus and Mary. This means we lack the freedom and holiness human beings were meant to have. Because of Original Sin, our human nature is weakened. We are influenced by ignorance, suffering, and knowledge of our own death. We're inclined to sin because our natural power for relating to God and choosing good is weakened.

Think about that for a second and then consider whether you have ever done something selfish, mean, or hateful and later wondered why you did it? This gives you

an idea about what an inclination to sin is and what makes us want to sometimes put our own pleasure ahead of doing what is right.

You may think it is not fair for newborn children to have Original Sin, because they couldn't have done anything to deserve it. Original Sin is not a sin we commit. How it gets passed on from generation to generation is a mystery we do not fully understand.

Even though Original Sin affects us all, it does not mean we are born evil, and it does not stop us from returning to God. We have all been created in the image of God and have been offered his friendship. Through Baptism, the chief Sacrament for the forgiveness of sins, we are freed from Original Sin, washed clean, and made new. God's power will always prevail over sin and evil. The washing away of Original Sin gave you a great start in life. You were united to Christ, who died and rose, freed from sin, and filled with the Holy Spirit.

The Celebration of Baptism

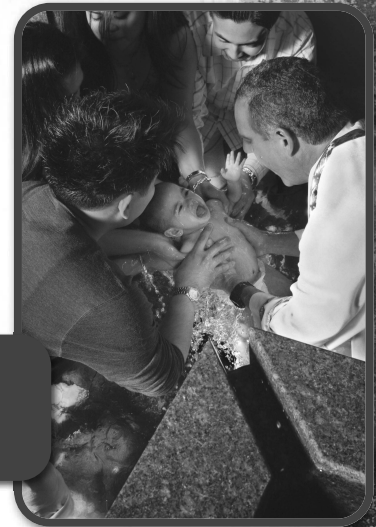
Even after the preparation rites, there is still more to do before a person is plunged into the waters or water is poured on her or him. If the water is not already blessed, the priest does so by asking the Father, through the Son, to send the power of the Holy Spirit upon the water so that the person being baptized will be “born of water and Spirit” (John 3:5). Then the priest asks the parents and godparents some questions about their faith. Because most candidates for Baptism are babies and thus too young to express faith, the priest is trying to be sure that the main adults in the babies’ lives have faith. This part is called the Profession of Faith or Renewal of Baptismal Promises. (At your Confirmation, you will be asked to renew your baptismal promises, but we’ll explore what that means in the next chapter.)

The Water and the Holy Spirit

Once the parents and godparents renew their baptismal promises, it is finally time for the central aspect of the Sacrament. Picture yourself at this point. Do you imagine yourself being immersed in the water, or do you imagine water being poured over your head?

The priest says the name of the candidate and immerses him or her in water three times or pours water on his or her head three times while saying these words: “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” The child is baptized in the name of the Trinity.

Baptism by immersion is a rich symbol of dying to sin and rising to new life.



The Trinity

Christians are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. This means we are baptized in the name of the one God, who has made himself known to us in the three divine Persons of the Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Trinity is the central mystery of our faith. We describe the Trinity as a mystery because we cannot completely comprehend this reality. Though we can know a great deal about God through reason, we have to depend on our faith in God, who has made himself known to us through Revelation.

The three Persons are all one God, one divine being, yet they are distinct Persons, completely in union with one another. This communion means that the work they do is always the accomplishment of all three Persons. However, some of God's works are more strongly associated with a particular one.

The Father is the first Person of the Trinity. We often think of God the Father as the Creator. This is true, but

remember it is also true that the Son and the Holy Spirit created the world. Like a parent, the Father is the source from which life comes, making it natural to have the Father in our mind when we think of creation.

Jesus Christ is the second Person of the Trinity, the Savior and Redeemer. His titles help us to recognize all he did for the sake of our salvation. We cannot forget, though, that the Father and the Holy Spirit are also at work in our salvation.

The Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity, inspires and guides us, and makes our lives holy. We recognize that many gifts are given to us by the Holy Spirit, but these gifts are truly given by the Father and the Son too.

Even though each Person of the Trinity is distinct, it is one God who creates, saves, and makes us holy. One God in three Persons—it's as simple, and as complicated, as that!

Whether a candidate is immersed or whether the water is poured, the water ritual is a sacramental sign of God's action. It is important to understand what God does for us through Baptism:

- God cleanses us and washes away Original Sin and all personal sin if we are old enough to have committed any.
- God brings us new life in Christ and makes us adopted children of the Father.
- God helps us to see the world as filled with goodness.
- God makes us brothers and sisters of Christ.
- God helps us to see ourselves as filled with the Holy Spirit.
- God incorporates us into the Church, the Body of Christ.
- God makes us sharers in the priesthood of Christ, which means we are people who, through Christ, know the Father and help others know him too.

The Church uses water, a symbol of life and death, in Baptism because the baptismal waters cleanse us and bring us new life, but they also bring an end to our old selves and to sin.

More Oil

Yes, more oil. After Baptism, children are anointed on the top of the head with a sacred oil called Chrism, which is perfumed olive oil that has been consecrated by the



At your Baptism you were anointed with the Sacred Chrism and received the Holy Spirit. How has the Holy Spirit been active in your life since the day of your Baptism?