

## Parents' Guide for Confirmation Lessons



This package has been designed to help parents guide their child as they journey toward a more complete Christian spiritual maturity while preparing to be confirmed. Candidates will soon be confirming that they wish to become full members of the Church in both their thoughts and actions. This is a major commitment that requires an informed decision to be made by each candidate so that they might feel confident in living out their new role in the Church. While no candidate will ever follow this road alone, as parents, sponsors or members of the community, we need to do everything possible to make this journey a rewarding one for each candidate.

In an attempt to do my part to help out, I have been asked to create a user friendly guide that will help you draw out the essential information from the "Confirmation for teens" program that will help your son or daughter to make a solid, informed decision about choosing to be confirmed. It seems these days we are all pulled too far in too many directions, making it difficult to find the time to focus our energy on one specific task. A quote from one of my favourite books by Og Mandino touches on this by stating, "Concentrate your energy. To be everywhere is to be nowhere." If I can help make it easier for candidates and their families to go through this material, and understand what is really important for them to know in order to receive the sacrament of Confirmation, then my time has been well spent.

In order to successfully complete this program, candidates will be required to concentrate on a number of concepts related to Confirmation and to complete a number of activities. The concepts to be focused on are:

- Understanding the Sacraments of Initiation - Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist
- Understanding basic belief statements of the Catholic Church - The Nicene and Apostles' Creeds, the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes
- Understanding the gifts and fruits we have been given by the Holy Spirit.

The activities to be completed are:

- Selecting a Confirmation name
- Selecting a sponsor
- Writing a Saints essay
- Completing a witness project
- Writing a letter to the Bishop
- Completing family homework assignments
- Participating in a candidates' retreat.

This guide will be comprised of brief lesson overviews and will identify objectives to be met for each lesson. Hopefully this will help each family to concentrate their energy on the most important information in this program. I will also describe the various activities that need to be completed to successfully complete the program.

I hope this is an informative and spiritually rewarding journey for your family.

Peace,

*Mike Osiowy*

## **Lesson One: Food for Our Great Journey**

### **Objectives**

1. Help the candidate understand that Christian maturity involves a "journey" that lasts a lifetime.

Journeying toward spiritual maturity requires that we seek to understand and follow the teachings of Jesus Christ, and to be open to the power of the Holy Spirit. It is essential for candidates to understand that by receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation they are in fact stating that they are choosing to follow the teachings of Jesus! Before agreeing to this they need to make sure they know what the teachings are. This lesson simply attempts to focus the candidates on the journey they are about to encounter; they will be introduced to the teachings of the Church in lessons to follow.

## **Lesson Two: The Parish Commitment Ceremony**

### **Objectives**

1. Emphasize to the candidates the importance of belonging to a faith community and understanding the very real presence of Christ in that community every time its members gather "in His name."

This lesson is one that can be read through quickly without focusing closely on the details of the ceremony. Each parish will introduce the candidates **in** a unique way and the ceremony identified **in** this lesson will not necessarily be what Father Fred chooses to do at St. Mary's. It is important for the candidates to understand that our parish community will be supporting them, and praying for them, as they prepare to be confirmed.

## **Lesson Three: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist - Our Introduction to the Life of the Church**

### **Objectives**

1. Explain and describe each of the Sacraments of Initiation - Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.
2. Describe how the three sacraments of initiation are connected and how, together, they complete the process of initiation into the Catholic Church.

I will break down the essential elements of this lesson hopefully making it easier to understand the Sacraments of Initiation and give you information that could be used to help describe it to your child, if necessary.

## **UNDERSTANDING THE SACRAMENTS**

A sacrament, by definition, relates to formal religious ceremonies established or recognized by Jesus, which are considered especially sacred. Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist are known as the Sacraments of Initiation that are our introduction to life in the Catholic Church.

### **BAPTISM**

For most of us, our initiation into the Church began when we were mere infants. Our parents spoke on our behalf requesting that we be brought into the faith of the Church through baptism. **In** doing so we were freely given the grace of God even though this was a completely passive process for us. What a gift! Baptism was our birth into the family of the Church. We have received the fullness of life that only Christ can give. **In** order to appreciate this gift for all that it is, we need to do our best to understand what the grace of God is.

Once again, by definition, grace is the influence of God operating in man to improve or strengthen him. What this means is that at Baptism we become one with God, that God is living within us! With this we are unconditionally accepted and loved by God. Our next challenge as we grow and mature in our faith is to understand how we can use this gift of grace to do what God wills us to do here on earth.

### **EUCCHARIST**

As children our existence is a relatively simple one- eat, drink, sleep- life is good! As we grow, it becomes important to meet social and psychological needs along with our basic physical needs. It is in celebrating Eucharist that we receive the nourishment we need to feed our spirit and keep it strong. Receiving Eucharist reflects our desire to be at one with God. Our world is full of things that distract us from being at one with God at all times. Attending mass on Sunday is one way of helping us to focus our spiritual energy and fuel up for the week to come. Being part of a weekly Eucharistic celebration is like sitting down for a family meal. Here we are together with members of our faith community, with God as our loving parent. This is our time to give thanks and praise to God, to forgive one another, to reflect on the Word of God and how we might apply it to our lives during the following week, and to be nourished by the sacred bread and wine. Here we are given everything we will need to help make it easier to live our faith.

### **CONFIRMATION**

Receiving the nourishment that is Eucharist becomes complete once we confirm our commitment to live by the baptismal promises that our parents initiated for us. Confirmation becomes the active part of the initiation process. After carefully examining the teaching of the Church, each Confirmation candidate will seek to accept these teachings as his or her own. Receiving the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit at Confirmation help empower us to become more fully immersed in the life of our faith community. Celebrating Eucharist weekly certainly helps give us the strength required to honestly do our best to live up to our baptismal promises.

## **Lesson Four: We Believe**

### **Objectives**

1. Review and analyze the basic belief statements of the Catholic Church - the Nicene Creed and the Apostles' Creed.
2. Carefully study the guidelines set forth by Scripture - the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes.
3. Stress the importance of understanding the beliefs of the Catholic Church so that one may make a mature and informed decision in regards to being confirmed.

For this lesson, I will identify the essential components and once again do my best to put this into words that will help make it easier for you, to discuss with your child if they have questions about this information.

### **BASIC BELIEF STATEMENTS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH**

Confirmation is about making an informed decision to become a fully active member of the Catholic faith community. This is not a decision to be taken lightly. It is very important that each candidate do their research to make sure they understand what they are committing to. When signing up to play a community sport or to participate in this year's science fair at school, for example, an individual will want to know a few things before making the commitment to sign up. What are the rules to be followed, how much money is it going to cost, how much of my free time is this going to take up - the questions go on and on. Being confirmed is more than just receiving the sacrament because it is the next on the list! The candidate must play an active role in choosing to receive the sacrament when they are ready and willing to play by all the rules. The better the candidate understands the Church and its teachings, the more mature your decision to become an active and committed member of the community.

### **CREEDS**

A creed is a formal statement of the essential points of religious belief as authorized by a church. The early Christians slowly began developing their beliefs about God as their understanding grew. Not all the beliefs held were necessarily true, therefore, at various times the Pope and Bishops of the Church would meet to clarify beliefs. The **Nicene Creed** is an example of this as it was in the town of Nicaea, in the year 325, that Church leaders gathered to consider what the Church held as sacred doctrine. The council formulated this creed that is a true cornerstone of our faith. The **Apostles' Creed** is another of the basic belief statements of the Church.

The **Ten Commandments** and the **Beatitudes** are two scripturally based guidelines for Christian behaviour. While the Ten Commandments essentially tell us what we are not supposed to do, the Beatitudes tell us what we must do and how we must live our lives if we are to be true followers of Jesus. Sometimes it is easier to not do something than it is to do something that requires a little more effort! It is important that each Confirmation candidate understand that Christianity is not a passive faith, rather it is a living faith requiring involvement and commitment.

## **Lesson Five: A Brief History of the Sacrament**

### **Objectives**

1. Familiarize the candidates with the basic history of the Sacrament of Confirmation from the first century to modern times.
2. Recognize the similarities and differences between ancient and modern celebrations of the sacrament.

This lesson focuses on helping the candidates understand the basics of the Sacrament of Confirmation. Changes have been made over the years - and may be made again in the future - in terms of how and when the sacrament is received. Hopefully candidates will get a sense of unity with fellow Christians throughout the centuries. Candidates are also asked to reflect on ways they can better use their unique gifts and talents to build up God's kingdom here on earth. This comes by way of the "Homework for the Family" assignment.

## **Lesson Six: The Sacrament of the Holy Spirit**

### **Objectives**

1. Study the Church's teaching regarding the Holy Spirit.
2. Help candidates recognize the work and influence of the Holy Spirit in their lives today.

Because the Sacrament of Confirmation focuses on the special presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, this lesson attempts to review what the Church teaches concerning the Holy Spirit. The first part of the lesson examines excerpts from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* which helps us to better understand the nature and role of the Holy Spirit. The second part takes a look at how the Holy Spirit is described in sacred Scripture. Finally, "Homework for the Family" attempts to have each candidate attend to instances in their everyday lives in which the action of the Holy Spirit is truly evident.

Describing the essence of the Holy Spirit is no easy task. This is one of the areas where the candidates will struggle the most in this whole process. It is essential to figure out a way to describe the Holy Spirit to your child in a way they will understand. Hopefully the few words I put down here will help inspire you to think of a creative way to describe the Holy Spirit to your child.

After many years of trying to create concrete examples to describe the abstract concept of the Holy Spirit, I have narrowed it down to the following. I see the Holy Spirit as being a *life force* that resides within us. The only way for anyone to know that this force is within us is to show it through our words and actions. In order for people to see that we, believe in God, we need to show them that the Holy Spirit lives within us by doing and saying what Jesus would do or say. This is done by using the gifts of the Spirit that are sealed within us at Confirmation. These gifts will be described in the next lesson. A concrete example I use to describe this concept is that of an electrical circuit in your home. We know that there are wires behind our walls carrying electricity but we don't see that electricity in action until we plug an appliance into an outlet that is connected to those wires. However, some appliances still won't work even if they are plugged in until

the "on" switch is activated. At that point a lamp becomes a light source showing us a connection to this electrical force running behind our walls. Turn it off and it is nothing more than a piece of furniture! In the same way we can show the Holy Spirit lives within us when we tap into this *life force*, turn the switch on, and allow others to see the Holy Spirit working through us. Anyone can say they believe in Christ, but it is the people who let others see the Holy Spirit through their words and actions who are the true followers of Christ. I challenge you to think of a time when you witnessed someone choosing to use their gifts to do the will of God, and maybe one of the opposite, in an attempt to better help your child understand how the Holy Spirit can be witnessed by others through their words and actions.

## **Lesson Seven: Holy Spirit, Bearer of Gifts**

### **Objectives**

1. Recognize Confirmation as a sacrament in which recipients are strengthened by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, Who is their helper and guide, as they journey toward Christian maturity.
2. Examine and describe the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.
3. Understand that the Spirit bestows these gifts not only for our benefit, but for the good of our faith community, the whole Church, and the entire world.
4. Briefly describe the twelve "fruits" of the Spirit.

It is likely that during the Confirmation celebration the candidates will be quizzed, to make sure they *know their stuff*, indicating they are ready to receive the Sacrament. The information about the gifts and fruits of the spirit is very important for them to not only know, but to be able to explain them as well. The gifts of the Spirit are given to us to help us do God's will on earth, while the fruits of the Spirit are the intrinsic rewards we receive as a result of applying the gifts of the Spirit. For example, we might become much more peaceful, patient people by applying the gift of understanding when our children do things we don't necessarily comprehend. If we try our best to understand what they are doing, and why, we will likely develop more patience with them which will also bring more peace to our lives. Please do your best to make sure your child understands the information in this lesson well.

## **Lesson Eight: A Sacrament of Christian Witness**

### **Objectives**

1. Explain the meaning of the term "Christian witness."
2. Review guidelines for selecting suitable and rewarding "service projects."

This lesson gives a very clear overview of the service project that candidates will have to complete prior to being confirmed. There are a wide variety of things each individual could do, as an act of service for others, to successfully complete this project. It is important that this project not be something that adds significant stress to your life! Make sure to select a project that is workable and realistic. The key is to help your child realize that serving others can and should be *an enjoyable experience* which allows them the chance to see the face of God in those they serve. For this reason, the project should be an activity outside of the home, e.g. helping the Activettes or other service organization with a project, Peace Patrol at Holy Spirit School etc.

## **Lesson Nine: Signs and Symbols of the Sacrament of Confirmation**

### **Objectives**

1. Understand the importance of "ritual" and "symbols" in everyday living.
2. Take a close look at the significant symbols of the presence of God found in the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation.

This lesson nicely explains some of the finer points of the Confirmation celebration itself. While the Bishop will not likely ask candidates to recite the nine significant signs of the presence of God in the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation, it is important that they be aware of these signs and that they understand what they represent. This information will help your child make a more mature and informed decision about being confirmed.

## **Lesson Ten: Celebration of the Rite of Confirmation**

### **Objectives**

1. Examine the primary parts of the Confirmation liturgy.
2. Establish guidelines that will assist candidates in their selection of appropriate sponsors and Confirmation names.

Lesson Ten reviews the primary parts of the Eucharistic celebration surrounding the Sacrament of Confirmation. The purpose of this is to familiarize the candidates with the proceedings of the day so that they will know what to expect. Hopefully, the candidates will understand that the Confirmation rite involves the *entire assembly*. Everyone gathered in the Church are witnesses to the Sacrament, and through their own faith, they support and empower those about to be confirmed. Hopefully the information in the "Homework for the Family" section is helpful for those having questions related to sponsors and/or Confirmation names.

## **Lesson Eleven: Summary, Review ... and Some Final Thoughts**

### **Objectives**

1. Reaffirm that the decision to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation - and thus become more fully immersed in the life of God's Church - belongs to each individual candidate.
2. Basic review of the six main topics discussed in the previous ten lessons.
3. Assist the candidates in writing letters to the Bishop in which they formally request to be confirmed.

After going through this lesson, your child should be able to comfortably say they are ready to be confirmed, clearly understanding what they are committing to. It is a very good review of the essential components of the Confirmation program. Hopefully the guideline for what the letter to the Bishop should look like proves helpful.

## **Lesson Twelve: Confirmation Candidate Retreat Day**

### **Objectives**

1. Get a sense of what the retreat day will be like for Confirmation candidates.

The retreat that the candidates will be taking part in is designed to provide an extended period of time for quiet reflection and self-study. It also allows the candidates to get together with their peers who will also be receiving the sacrament. The retreat at St. Mary's will not necessarily follow the format described in this lesson. As a result, candidates can simply skim through this information to get an idea of what their retreat will be like.

