Guidelines and Handbook for Confirmation Sponsors 2017-2018

(GIVE TO YOUR SPONSOR)

Holy Spirit Catholic Church
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1. The Sponsor for a Confirmation Candidate must be a fully initiated, practicing Catholic who is able to receive the Eucharist, who is willing and disposed to carry out the responsibilities of a Sponsor, and who is not the parent of the Candidate. [Canons 873-874]

2. The Sponsor must be one who shows the ability to witness to the life and practices of the Catholic faith.

3. The Sponsor must be at least 16 years of age and have already received the Sacrament of Confirmation and the Sacrament of the Most Holy Eucharist. [Canon 874]

4. It is desirable, but not necessary, that the one who undertook the role of Sponsor at Baptism be also the Sponsor for Confirmation. [Canon 893]

5. The Sponsor must participate in required training, class sessions, service projects, and days of prayer with the Candidate as designated by the parish Youth Minister.

**Please Note: There is only one Sponsor for each Candidate for Confirmation.**

In addition to the above, if a Sponsor is married, he/she must be married in and according to the laws of the Church. Persons who are not able to receive the Eucharist due to invalid marriages are not eligible to be Sponsors. If you know that you do not meet these conditions, please be honest with the young person who has asked you to be his/her Sponsor and tell him/her you cannot do so at this time. We also encourage you to take whatever steps you need to take to restore yourself to full communion with the Church. The earlier you address the problem situation, the better your chances are of resolving the issue in time to serve as a Sponsor.

**BECOMING A CONFIRMATION SPONSOR**

It is an honor and a privilege to be asked to serve as the Sponsor for a young person who is preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation. Accepting this responsibility should only be done after serious prayer and discernment. If you accept this role you will be walking through his/her faith journey with your Candidate; this can be the most important relationship that he/she forms in the process. A unique bond can and should be made between the two of you, so it is extremely important that you discern and accept for the appropriate reasons.

**WHAT IS A SPONSOR’S ROLE?**

Christian life is intergenerational. The Church’s process of Christian initiation calls a new generation into the vision and purpose of the Christian community. Confirmation preparation is part of mentoring a future generation of Christians, of nurturing their idealism, affirming the promise of their lives, and immersing them in the Christian vision of building a community of love and justice in the world.

Our young people are the future and promise of the Christian community. Typically, they have a burning passion to be somebody and to do something that matters for the world—right now. They bring energy and enthusiasm where we adults sometimes bring weariness and cynicism. The parish as a community has the responsibility and the privilege of mentoring our young—of calling them into a future with us.

Many people have nurtured the Candidates to bring them to the moment of deciding to be confirmed. Parents have shared their faith with their children. They have brought them to Mass, prayed with them at home, and included them in the works of mercy and justice they perform. Those of us who teach have helped them learn the Scriptures and doctrines of the community over the years of their religious education.

Parishioners have taken these teens as “prayer partners” at First Communion to support them during their preparation. Parishioners who work to feed and clothe the poor, who visit shut-ins and nursing homes, and work in shelters, have given our teens a vision of what it means to be a Christian community.
Sharing in the life of the parish community is a vital part of formation for Confirmation. In addition, the process calls for the Candidate to choose a mature adult to serve as an individual Sponsor—the traditional name given to the one who takes the role of walking with a Candidate throughout his/her preparation for Confirmation.

The Sponsor has the responsibility of living the example of a Christian life, sharing faith, and listening to the ideas and concerns of the Candidate. The relationship often involves developing a life-long friendship. This relationship forms a bridge for the Candidate into the Christian community as the Sponsor serves as a representative of the whole parish community. The community is the true Sponsor and mentor. Individual Sponsors may move away or turn away from their faith, but the faith of the parish community will continue to support the faith development of their young people. Ultimately, the role of the Sponsor is to support the Candidate in becoming an active member of the Church.

- The Sponsor is a MODEL of how a practicing Roman Catholic should live in today's world as they seek to understand the Lord, the teachings of the Church, and the people of God.
- The Sponsor is a FRIEND who knows the Candidate and can be a witness to his/her maturing faith before our parish community.
- The Sponsor is a GUIDE, confidant, and listener who will seek to understand and help guide the Candidate's life and personal struggles.
- The Sponsor is a LEARNER who is interested in and committed to their own growth as they walk this faith journey with the Candidate.
- The Sponsor is a MENTOR who will introduce the Candidate to parish organizations in order to meet the community, as well as the Sunday liturgy and any other special parish or Church ceremonies.
- The Sponsor is a COMPANION who will continue after Confirmation to walk the faith journey with the Candidate and invite them into fuller participation in parish life and service.
- The Sponsor is expected to ATTEND all specified gatherings with the Candidate and attend liturgies with the Candidate whenever possible.
- The Sponsor is expected to PRAY for the Candidate, the Candidate’s family, and the parish Confirmation team.

Candidates and Sponsors should ideally talk and/or meet at least once a month. These meetings can be social in nature, and provide both an opportunity to get to know one another better and to share faith issues or discussions. Within the context of the parish Confirmation process, several opportunities will be provided for Sponsors to interact with Candidates. In addition, the parish provides a monthly discussion topic and guideline.

The role of the Sponsor is not symbolic. He/she is responsible for helping the Candidate prepare for full membership in the Christian community.

QUALITIES OF A GOOD SPONSOR

- HOSPITALITY: A Sponsor should be a welcoming and inclusive person—a host. The Sponsor needs to be open to accepting and discovering the person and the gifts of his/her Candidate. The Sponsor helps the Candidate establish a sense of belonging to the parish community.
- PRAYERFULNESS: By being a person who possesses a healthy prayer life, the Sponsor will be a person responsive to the needs of the Candidate and the message of the Holy Spirit.
- RESPECTFULNESS: A Sponsor needs to be open and considerate; he/she needs to value and esteem the opinions, ideas, gifts, talents, hopes, fears, and feelings of the Candidate. The Sponsor must be able to treat any sharing done with his/her Candidate with utmost confidentiality—parents are not privileged to this sharing without the expressed approval of the Candidate.
- GENEROSITY: In today's somewhat frantic world, just to be a Sponsor takes a great deal of generosity. Sponsors will be called upon to be generous with their time, talent, patience, and prayer—Sponsors can't be “stingy” with their time or feelings.
- FAITHFULNESS: Faithfulness by no means expects perfection, but a Sponsor must meet the guidelines established by the Diocese of Fresno and Holy Spirit parish. A Sponsor must be a fully-initiated, practicing member of the Catholic Church who is disposed to receive the Eucharist. In addition, a
Sponsor should be steadfast, seeking, obedient to the teachings of the Church, open, and growing in their own faith.

CONFIRMATION: A Sacrament of Initiation

Confirmation is a Sacrament of Initiation, one of the three Sacraments through which people become members of the Catholic Christian community. In the early centuries of the Church, most people became Christians as adults, either because they were converted to the Christian faith as adults or because they postponed their baptisms. When they chose to become Christians, they received the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist all at once.

To be baptized, these adults plunged down into a pool of water, as a sign of Jesus’ death, and rose from the water to share in the life of the Risen Christ. These new Christians then put on white robes and received an anointing with the Spirit, the Sacrament of Confirmation. Baptism and Confirmation shared one celebration. The Christian, newly baptized in water and sealed in the Spirit, then joined the community around the table of the Lord to celebrate and share the Eucharist, the third Sacrament of Initiation.

As Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire in the early 300s A.D., increasing numbers of people joined the Church. The Christian community began to administer Confirmation apart from Baptism, so bishops, who could no longer baptize everyone, could at least continue to seal all new Christians in the Spirit.

The way we celebrate these three Sacraments of Initiation today stresses their connection. When Confirmation does not follow Baptism, as is usually the case with infants, the rite of Baptism includes an anointing with oil. For teens and adults who were baptized as infants, Confirmation begins with a renewal of baptismal vows. We celebrate Confirmation at the Eucharist to connect it with the third Sacrament of Initiation.

The promises parents make for their children at Baptism summarize the faith of the entire Christian community. The promises state the same beliefs we proclaim when we pray the Apostles’ Creed or profess the Nicene Creed at Mass. At their Confirmation, teen and adult Candidates will make these promises for themselves. Consider your own understanding of the baptismal promises as you begin assisting your Candidate. Reflect on each of the four baptismal promises.

Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth?

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, died, and was buried, rose from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father?

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who came upon the apostles at Pentecost and is given to us sacramentally in Confirmation?

Do you believe in the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?

FAITH SHARING WITH YOUR CANDIDATE

Adolescents have a reputation for being apathetic, disrespectful, and for not listening to anyone. Without a doubt there are some young people that fit this description—and so do some adults! However, most teens are both reachable and responsive when they know someone cares about them and what’s going on in their lives, in this case preparation for Confirmation.

Many good Catholics refuse to be Sponsors because they feel they don’t know enough about theology or about teens. Sponsors do not need a degree in theology or child psychology to work with young people. What Sponsors need to bring to teens is their experience of living as Catholic Christians and their availability to share what that means to them with others.
Faith sharing means talking about one’s own experiences of faith, doubt, insight, and rewards. It also means listening attentively, so teens can also share. Faith sharing is a mutual exchange, as is any friendship. Good listening is primary to nurturing a relationship with a Confirmation Candidate.

This handbook includes faith-sharing questions about the topics Confirmation Candidates explore. Look these questions over before you begin your regular meetings with your Candidate.

Here are some tips for talking with your Candidate:

Be honest. Teens usually know when you’re not telling the truth, which will make you much less credible in their eyes. Don’t be afraid to open up and be vulnerable to their questions. That does not mean you should let them ask questions that are too personal or inappropriate. By listening to their questions, responses, and reactions, you will hear what is really on their minds and in their hearts. Teens are honest—oftentimes painfully so.

Don’t be judgmental. If your Candidate reacts to a situation differently from you or your expectations, simply explain what you would do and why. Don’t get angry or threatening. Some young people will say many things just for effect. If you react negatively, you give them the perfect excuse for tuning out and turning off to Confirmation and religion in general.

Take time with your Candidate to schedule monthly meetings or phone conversations throughout their preparation process to discuss their faith related issues.

Be prepared to attend Sponsor/Candidate sessions and other events as required by the parish.

**PRAYING WITH YOUR CANDIDATE**

Sharing prayer is an important part of sharing faith with the young person who chooses you as a Sponsor. Praying with your Candidate may feel awkward at first. Praying is an intimate act to do together, and one that may well help you and your Candidate to grow closer over time.

Set a time during your meetings to pray. By designating a prayer time, you and your Candidate will become accustomed to a pattern. The beginning or end of your time together are obvious possibilities. A pattern will free you from having to decide each time if you are going to pray. It can become a special time that your Candidate takes seriously. This handbook includes some preparation prayers for you with faith sharing questions. Young people usually react with interest if you can lead spontaneous prayer. If you are more comfortable with formal prayer, then feel free to do that. Perhaps you can add a petition or prayer for your Candidate at the end of the formal prayer. The more at ease you are, the more at ease your Candidate will be.

**SPONSOR RESPONSIBILITIES**

Sponsors have several responsibilities in their Candidate’s Confirmation preparation. Throughout the process Sponsors are called to be a friend and a confidant to their Candidate, to arrange time for prayer and faith-sharing conversations, and to attend any special sessions as arranged by the parish.

The Sponsor has the responsibility of writing a letter to the parish [toward the end of the second year] that explains who the Candidate is and why he/she should be part of the Confirmation process. The Sponsor accompanies the Candidate forward at Confirmation for the anointing with chrism, extending the gesture of support in the name of the community.

**FAITH-SHARING CONVERSATIONS**

The following guidelines are offered as an aid to faith-sharing conversations with your Candidate.

**Human Freedom**

Our human freedom, one of the topics of the Confirmation preparation process, gives each of us the choice to love and to snub, to create and to destroy, to do the right action and to do wrong. Christians see human freedom as power to love God who loves us; to love one another as Jesus loved us, to love in return for all the care people have shown us.
Below you will find a prayer assignment to discuss with your Candidate during your faith-sharing. Journal endings to the following two prayer reflections, and then share and discuss your reflections with your Candidate. Have your Candidate journal and share his/her reflections with you.

Dear Creator, in You I find the freedom to...
In this Confirmation process I want to explore this about You, God...

Prayer
Holy Spirit, work through me. May Your gifts influence my free choice and allow me the ability to communicate Your truth. Let my concern for this Confirmation Candidate be as strong and unshaken as Yours for me. Amen.

Scripture
Scripture is another focus of your Candidate’s preparation. This focus explores how the traditions of the Old and New Testaments describe people’s experience of the Spirit.

You are given the task of talking with your Candidate about what a good Christian is and what belonging to the Catholic Church really involves. The questions below are for you and your Candidate to discuss. You might want to journal a response.

- What makes someone fit the label “good Christian”?
- Can I be a good person if I am not a good Christian? Why or why not?
- Do I have to be Catholic to be a good Christian? Why or why not?
- How does the label “good Christian” fit me?
- What questions do I have about faith? About the Holy Spirit?
- What are my doubts about God?

Prayer
Generous Spirit, You give me the tools I need to make right decisions. You give me the drive to act and the awareness to appreciate Your power. Thank You for curing my loneliness, opening my eyes to injustice, and allowing me to be part of Your loving faith community. It is a privilege to be able to give back to this community. For this and so much more I offer this prayer. Amen.

Spirituality
Spirituality is our response as whole persons with bodies, minds, feelings, and relationships to the presence of the Spirit in our lives. Our spirituality expresses our relationship with God and our confidence in that relationship. Discuss spirituality with your Candidate, using the questions below to help you. Share with your Candidate the way you pray. Include participation in parish worship.

- Why do I pray?
- When do I pray? How do I pray?
- What do I count on God for?
- What can God count on me for?

Prayer
Holy Spirit, stir me into action. May Your presence become obvious to others through my words and deeds. Let it be recognized by all people, especially me that You dwell within me and I am incomplete without You. Allow me to be a sign of Your love, especially to my Candidate. Amen.
Sacraments
Most teenage Candidates for Confirmation have grown up sharing the sacramental life of the Catholic Church. In this way the parish community of faith has mentored your Candidate, calling him/her to be the Body of Christ in the world. The faith-sharing questions for this session invite you to reflect with your Candidate on his/her experience of growing up in the parish community.

• What do I remember about the celebrations of the Sacraments in which I have taken part?
• What are my first memories of going to church?
• What makes me feel involved in my parish?
• What do I know about my patron saint?

Prayer
Unceasing Spirit, You wash away our emptiness and welcome us into Your community. You forgive our brokenness and accept us as people who make mistakes. You invite us to Your table and share Your life with us. Spirit, You move in us, guiding us toward You, through relationships, through connections and commitments. We are not only driven by You, but find comfort and rest in You as well. It is by Your constant presence that we are made whole. Amen.

Service
Service is an essential commitment for the Christian. Confirmation programs require teens to do service as part of their initiation process into full membership in the community. The questions below invite you to talk with your Candidate about the service projects he/she is involved in.

Share with your Candidate the many ordinary daily ways they can serve at home, in the neighborhood, and in school as well as putting them in touch with groups who work to address such social problems as hunger, refugees, or affordable housing. These problems can seem overwhelming to your Candidate if he/she doesn’t find ways to join with others to help. Invite your Candidate to join in a service project with you. Use the following questions to discuss service with your Candidate.

• What service do I enjoy doing most?
• How do I act as a sign of the Spirit outside of church?
• To what situations or crises in the world have I as a Christian felt I had to respond?

Prayer
Spirit of Life, You give us Yourself present through Jesus, a commoner, a teacher, a healer, a family member, a neighbor, a miracle worker, a human, God. This person, whom You loved most, was a sign, an example, and a sacrifice. Let us remember to keep the story alive by becoming a people of loving action, following on the path that was laid for us. Amen.

Confirmation
The Sacrament of Confirmation seals the Candidate with the gift of the Spirit. Our Confirmation process aims to help Candidates recognize the Spirit at work in their own lives. The seal of the Spirit is the cross, the mark of the committed, self-giving Christian.

At the end of the process, your Candidate will want to discuss the following faith-sharing evaluation questions with you:

• What do you feel you gave me throughout this experience?
• When did you feel most helpful?
• What have you gained from this process?
• Would you be willing to Sponsor someone again?

These are questions for you to ask your Candidate:

• Why do you want to be confirmed?
• What have you gained from our discussions?
• Have you felt the support of others besides me in this process?
• What types of service or ministry are you planning to continue doing?

MONTHLY CANDIDATE/SPONSOR MEETINGS
All Sponsors are asked to meet with their Candidate on a regular basis to complete an assignment. These assignments are included at the end of this handbook; they are due in the Youth Ministry office on the last calendar day of the month assigned. NOTE: Please return ONLY the page with your signature.

If you live in the immediate area [Fresno/Clovis], we ask that your monthly meeting be held one-on-one and face-to-face; please leave other people out of the conversation. This is designed to be a special time for you and your Candidate to share your faith in an intimate way. Take your Candidate out for a hamburger or coffee and spend whatever time is necessary going over the month’s topic. If you live out of town, your meeting may be held over the telephone or even by instant messaging on the internet. Regardless of your method, please be sure to sign and return the forms to our office as requested.

We also ask that you attend Sunday Masses and other Holy Day Masses with your Candidate whenever possible.

IMPORTANT DATES FOR SPONSORS
Please be sure to ask your Candidate for a copy of their schedule of activities.
COME, FOLLOW ME!

GOALS:
This session will help you to examine the direction in which your life is going and reflect on what it means to follow Christ.

- As a follower of Jesus, you are asked to accept the challenge to love and to serve.
- Reflecting on your life story often will help you to set your goals as a follower of Jesus and to work out a plan of action to attain these goals.
- God is always with you on your journey of faith, helping you and comforting you.
- Through the sacraments, you and the other members of the body of Christ live and grow in your relationship with Jesus and one another.

The Word of God
The word of the LORD came to me thus: Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you. “Ah, Lord GOD!” I said, “I know not how to speak; I am too young.” But the LORD answered me, “Say not, I am too young.” To whomever I send you, you shall go; whatever I command you, you shall speak. Have no fear before them, because I am with you to deliver you, says the LORD. Then the LORD extended his hand and touched my mouth, saying, “See, I place my words in your mouth! This day I set you over nations and over kingdoms, to root up and to tear down, to destroy and to demolish, to build and to plant” [Jeremiah 1:4-10].

Discuss with your Sponsor:
Do you see yourself as “too young,” or do you have an understanding of the fact that God has a plan for you and your life?

Discipleship
You’re probably familiar with the terms leader and follower. Most leaders demand loyalty, respect, dedication, and personal sacrifice. Following Jesus certainly involves all of these qualities, but first and foremost it means loving Him in such a way that His life becomes part of your own story.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” He then said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was distressed that he had said to him a third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” [Jesus] said to him, “Feed my sheep. Amen, amen, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to dress yourself and go where you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” He said this signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when he had said this, he said to him, “Follow me” [John 21:15-19].

Thoughts from a fellow teen...
I’ve heard all the stories about Peter and the other men dropping their nets, leaving everything, and following Jesus, and I’m amazed. Oh—I’m sure He was a really magnetic person and all that—but to leave everything you have, everything you’ve worked for, to just leave it all and not look back? I don’t know if I could do that. Well, maybe I could do it for a little while, but then I’m afraid I’d get bored or something. I’m afraid that once the newness wore off, I’d find myself saying, “Is that all there is to this Christian life?” And I’m afraid—afraid that if I left everything to follow Him I’d be stuck with nothing of my own—and I’d be lost. Oh, I know. He’ll always be there and He’ll provide everything I need. That’s what they always say, but you can’t believe everything you hear. Besides, my guidance counselor says I have to have a clear, definite idea of where I’m going and how I’m
going to get there. And my parents say idealism and religion and stuff are all good—but you can't pay the bills with ideals and religion. So I have to take care of myself, don't I? Well, don't I? Lord—what do You think?

Discuss with your Sponsor:
1. What would Jesus ask you to do if He were here right now? How would you answer? Is there anything you would refuse to do?

2. Which of the causes listed below would be important enough for you to dedicate your whole life to? You're not limited to one choice. Discuss the reasons for your choice[s].
   a. Working for gun-control legislation
   b. Joining a religious community
   c. Establishing a successful corporation
   d. Building a world of peace and justice
   e. Becoming a famous athletic champion
   f. Wiping out political corruption and organized crime
   g. Working to end abortion

3. Read the following statements and discuss which one you agree with most strongly.
   a. Most people I know want to join a great cause that will benefit the world. They will make the necessary sacrifices, even without support from others.
   b. Most people I know want to join a great cause. They will make the necessary sacrifices, but need to be inspired by other dedicated people first.
   c. Most people I know want to join a great cause, but they hesitate to make the sacrifices so they will back out of any commitment.
   d. Most people I know want to live their private lives comfortably and not be disturbed by great causes or sacrifices.

4. Describe one way in which the Church is now challenging you to follow Christ in your life.

Your Life Story
One reason for looking at your life as a story is to help you see the direction your life is taking—where you've been, where you are now, and where you're going. Sketching out your autobiography is one way of stepping back and evaluating your direction. Write an outline in which you explore who you are. List the influences that have helped to make you who and what you are: your family, your neighbors, and your friends. Then, outline the ways in which various teachers and courses in school have helped you to form your ideas. Next, list your interests, hobbies, work, and any travel. State your goals for work or college. Explain how, if at all, these work or study goals are influencing your life today. How might these goals affect your life in five or ten years? Finally, describe the role God plays in your life and the role you want Him to play in the future.

Highlights on Your Journey of Faith
As you begin to prepare for Confirmation, review some of the highlights of your faith story. Use the questions below as a guide to reflect on your baptism, first reception of the Eucharist, and celebration of Reconciliation. You might want to consult your parent[s] for some of the answers.
1. Who is the priest who baptized you?
2. Who are your godparents?
3. What do your parents or godparents remember about your baptism?
4. How old were you when you received Holy Communion for the first time?
5. What does the sacrament of the Most Holy Eucharist mean to you now?
6. How often do you receive the Eucharist?
7. How old were you when you received the sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time?
8. How often do you receive Reconciliation now? Why?

Reflect...
[From Saint John Paul II's address to youth at New Orleans, Louisiana on September 12, 1987]
Listening to what you are telling me by your presence and through your representatives, I know that you are very much conscious of having a special mission in this world, of being partners in the mission of the Church.

I also know that in fulfilling your mission you are willing to give, you are willing to share, and you are willing to serve. And you are willing to do all this together, not alone! In this you are like Jesus: Jesus gave and He served and He was never alone. He tells us, “The one who sent me is with me, He has not left me alone” [John 8:29].

Yes, dear young people, I too want to speak about your mission, the reason for your life on earth, the truth of your lives. It is extremely vital for you to have a clear idea of your mission, in order to avoid being confused or deceived. In speaking to the Christians of his time, Saint Paul explicitly urged them, “Let no one deceive you in any way”—about your mission, about the truth, about where you are going. Let no one deceive you about the truth, about where you are going. Let no one deceive you about your lives.

Respond...

1. How do you think Jesus wants you to change direction and move closer to Him?
2. How can the realization that others in the Christian community have problems and struggles as well as joy and happiness help you?

Dear Candidate,

The story of the call of Jeremiah is a little like your call to be confirmed. He was afraid of the consequences of becoming a prophet. You, too, might be a bit worried about what will be expected of you when you are a fully initiated follower of Christ. You will be making Jesus’ story your own. But that doesn’t mean that your story is any less important. Christ is calling you to a great challenge—to follow Him more closely. There are many ways in which you can begin preparing for this great challenge. Begin by looking at your own life story. Notice the direction in which your journey is taking you. Are you moving closer to Christ? Do you need some mid-course corrections?

Be open to truth, to goodness, and to beauty. Be open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit when you pray. This openness will help you to hear the call of Jesus more clearly. Remember God’s promise to Jeremiah, and be willing to share part of your story from time to time with other members of the Christian community. You are not alone on this journey. As a “Pilgrim People” journeying together, we keep our faith alive and strong by sharing our faith stories with one another. It is in this way that we reveal our joys and sorrows, our fears and successes. Remember, your brothers and sisters in this community travel with you and support you in your efforts to set God’s word in your mouth, to build, or to plant.

Your Family in Christ

Pray...

Jesus, being Your follower is not always easy or popular. Sometimes, when I try so hard to help, to be of service, no one notices. But then, You never promised that following You would be glamorous. Is washing the family car or cooking a meal for my mom really part of being Your disciple? These little things certainly won’t make the evening news. Teaching younger children, or serving at Mass would seem to be more challenging. And yet, You tell me that all these things are different suits cut from the cloth of discipleship. Lord, I don’t know how to follow You. But you know where I can be most useful, most effective. I want to be there for you, Jesus, no matter what it costs. And when I feel like quitting, help me to keep going, to keep loving. For in the end, it will be my love for others which will make a difference to You. Help me, Jesus. Teach me to follow well. Amen.
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**SPONSOR/MENTOR COMPLETE:**

I met with my Candidate named above on [date of meeting]  
Our meeting was [check one]

- Face-to-face
- Over the telephone
- Over the internet [email, IM or SKYPE]

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<th>Sponsor’s Signature</th>
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**FOR OFFICE USE ONLY: OCTOBER 2017 Candidate/Sponsor Meeting**

Date received in the Youth Ministry Office  

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TEACH US TO PRAY

Jesus prayed to God all during His life. In both good times and bad, prayer was always refreshing to Jesus. When asked how to pray by His disciples, Jesus responded with the Lord’s Prayer—also known as the “Our Father.” Confirmation preparation is a great time for you to draw closer to Jesus in prayer.

Look at Your Story

People pray in many ways. Do you know people who pray? Do you pray? How? Why?

We all have times when we really feel happy about life! Things seem to go our way, no matter what we do. But there are other times when everything we do seems to turn out wrong. We become fearful or just need someone to lean on for love and advice. At other times, even when everything seems okay, we still feel uneasiness in our souls and we can’t explain why.

All of these times, these experiences, can be moments of prayer. There are times when we might say the Lord’s Prayer, asking God for help and love. There are other times when we might simply just want to talk and listen to God. We may choose to pause and express thanks for God’s blessings in our lives.

What experiences in your own life do you feel are, or could be, prayerful moments?

There are many different ways that we can pray—either alone or with others. We can pray from a prayer book or say prayers like the Lord’s Prayer. This way of praying is called formal prayer. We can also use our own words, either silently or aloud. This is an informal way to pray.

Private prayer includes those times that we spend alone with God, talking and listening to Him. Communal prayer is praying to God with others. When we pray with our families, or with our parish at Mass, we are engaged in communal prayer—prayer as a community.

Sometimes, we just offer prayer at any given moment. We don’t really plan to pray, we just feel like talking and listening to God at that moment in our lives—whether we’re on the athletic practice field, or listening to music, or sitting in a classroom, in a prayer group, or walking down the street—anywhere, anytime. This form of praying is called spontaneous prayer. Prayer may also be in words primarily expressed in a silent, attentive response to the presence of God. This form of praising God is called meditative prayer.

Describe an experience in your life that was prayerful. Were you alone? With others?

All the ways we pray have a common purpose—communication with our Lord and Creator. In prayer we talk and listen to God. We experience, or are aware of, God’s presence with us.

Reflect on your story and discuss with your Sponsor...

- What makes a particular moment or experience prayerful for you? Why?
- Have you changed the way you pray as you’ve gotten older?
- What is real prayer for you?
- What do you think may be obstacles to prayer in your life?
- Is Sunday Mass a prayer for you? Why or why not?

The Story of God and the Church

For most of us, our first experience of prayer was learning simple bedtime or mealtime prayers from our parents. As we grew older, we began to develop a sense of prayer from religious education, going to Mass, and the example of adults among our family and friends.
Some of us pray often and rely on prayer as a primary source of strength and support. Others pray seldom or not at all, feeling that prayer is not always meaningful or helpful to them. However often we pray, many of us may have favorite prayers or special times for prayer. Each of us, then, comes to prayer from our unique experiences of life.

Jesus, too, felt the need for prayer. His own experience of life surely had an impact on His prayer. The Gospels tell us how Jesus’ ministry began with a deeply religious experience. At His baptism in the Jordan River, the fullness of the Spirit is poured out upon Jesus. God speaks for all to hear, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” [Matthew 3:17].

**Prayer for Jesus…**

Prayer for Jesus was a time to talk and listen to God. In praying He thanked God, worshipped the God of love and mercy, pleaded for those sinners who most needed forgiveness, and asked for the help He needed Himself to carry on.

Why did Jesus pray? Who or what was changed by His prayer? Consider the following aspects of His life as you ponder this question.

Although He was a good mixer, blending easily into the many family and social circles of His time, Jesus was also somewhat lonely. His lifestyle was shocking to many people and He was the target of the hostility of religious leaders of His day. They were uncomfortable with His preaching and with some of the people with whom He associated. Jesus was often in the company of tax collectors, sinners, and prostitutes—outcasts whom He said it was His mission to serve.

Jesus, however, was not a loner. He loved people and enjoyed being with them. In His dealings with others, He was outgoing and friendly and certainly went out of His way for many people. In fact, He had a large following wherever He went. Jesus never lost the personal touch and often dealt with people one-on-one: Nicodemus, the blind man whose sight He restored, the widow of Naim whose dead son He brought back to life, the woman at the well in Samaria. The Gospels are filled with scenes of Jesus caring for, listening to, and healing people in person-to-person relationships.

Like all of us, Jesus, whether He was feeling accepted or rejected, needed time to be alone. So we find Him slipping away to pray…to be alone with God.

**Jesus and His Father…**

The hallmark of Jesus’ religious experience was the intimate relationship between Him and His Father. Jesus would often address God as “Abba,” which is a very personal term we would translate today as “Daddy.” This warm relationship with God is one of the most distinct features of all four Gospel portraits of Jesus and has become part of our Christian family heritage. Seeing Jesus at prayer one day and noting the peace and calm that fell upon Him in prayer, the disciples wanted to share His experience. Jesus then taught them the prayer we have come to call the Lord’s Prayer [see Luke 11:1-4 and Matthew 6:9-13]. Stop here and pray the Lord’s Prayer, paying close attention to the words and what you are asking from God when you pray this prayer of Jesus. Discuss this with your Sponsor.

**Our Journey of Faith**

Jesus didn’t always pray alone. He also prayed with His community in the *liturgical service of the Word in the synagogue*. As a religious Jew, He worshipped once each year with the community of Israel in the *temple sacrifice*. He shared the tradition of His people as a prayerful community.

Jesus prays with us when we gather for Mass. He prays in the readings of the Liturgy of the Word as well as in the Liturgy of the Hours [the daily prayer of the whole Church]. In all these prayers, the Lord's Prayer has a special place.
The Spirit given to us in Baptism and strengthened in Confirmation prays in us and empowers us to pray in Jesus' name. Our prayer is also one of listening to God’s Word in the Scriptures. We listen to what God is saying to us in a Scripture passage, and then reflect on its meaning in our lives. We trust that the Holy Spirit is with us when we pray. *“For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a spirit of adoption, through which we cry, ‘Abba, Father!’”* [Romans 8:15].

Discuss the following questions with your Sponsor:
- How do you understand the meaning of prayer now?
- Can you think of a time when you can pray to God?
- Do you want prayer to be a part of your daily life?
- How can the Scripture readings at Mass become more alive and a source of prayer for you?

**Faith in Action**

Listen to these words of advice from Jesus, and decide before this day is over to begin once more to put them into practice in your life: *“But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you”* [Matthew 6:6].

As encouragement to continue to pray, read these words of Jesus again and again and again: *“If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father in heaven give the holy Spirit to those who ask him?”* [Luke 11:13].

When you don't know what to pray, or what to ask, relax! Let the Holy Spirit pray with you and for you!

What would be the best time for you to spend time in prayer each day? Morning? Evening? Other?

**Focus on Confirmation**

Prayer isn’t just another “thing” Christians do; it is an essential part of living as a Confirmed Catholic. Prayer is “personal communication with Jesus and, through and in Him, with the Father” [National Catechetical Directory, #180]. When you are confirmed, it will be in the prayerful setting of worshipping God with other members of our parish community. Your prayer life will be enriched by the gift of the Spirit.

As you prepare to be strengthened in the Spirit you received in Baptism, you should take some time to learn how to listen to the Spirit within you. We call this the process of *discernment*.

When you have a difficult decision to make, one that might result in many consequences, use the process of discernment. Listen to the Spirit within you!

- **PRAY**—ask the Holy Spirit to help you decide what the right thing to do is.
- **INVESTIGATE**—read as much as you can on the subject. Talk with your peers, parents, and other adults.
- **WRITE**—list all the reasons why you should or shouldn’t do what you are planning.
- **IMAGINE**—try to see what the consequences will be for your life five or ten years from now. Interpret the consequences of your present and future to the best of your ability.
- **PRAY SOME MORE**—the process of prayer should be taking place throughout your investigating, writing, and imagining. However, when you’ve taken all the steps, quietly listen to the Spirit within you.

You received the Holy Spirit in Baptism; you will be strengthened by the Holy Spirit in Confirmation. Let the Spirit help you decide what to do.

- **MAKE YOUR DECISION**—one of the signs of the Spirit is peace. If after you make your decision you are upset, if something is missing or lacking in your decision-making process, go over the steps again.

Confirmation preparation is an excellent time to pause and reflect on how you might grow closer to Jesus in prayer. You may wish to pray for the strength of the Spirit of Jesus as you continue your preparation, and for all those who are preparing with you, including your Sponsor.
Confirmation Candidate’s Name ____________________________

PLEASE PRINT

SPONSOR/MENTOR COMPLETE:
I met with my Candidate named above on [date of meeting] _______/_____/_____

Our meeting was [check one]
    Face-to-face
    Over the telephone
    Over the internet [email, IM or SKYPE]

___________________________ __________________________
Sponsor’s Signature Date Signed

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY: NOVEMBER 2017 Candidate/Sponsor Meeting

Date received in the Youth Ministry Office _______/_____/_____
This session with your Sponsor will focus on your call to continue the mission of Jesus through service.

- You and your fellow Candidates have certain qualities that make each one of you a valued member of the Christian community.
- Service is learned by serving, and there are real needs in your community that you can serve now.
- Learning your present attitudes toward service can help you appreciate Christian ministry.
- The example of Jesus can help motivate you to fulfill your mission of service.

The Word of God

*Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news of him spread throughout the whole region. He taught in their synagogues and was praised by all. He came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom into the synagogue on the sabbath day. He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.” Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him. He said to them, “Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing” [Luke 4:14-21].*

I Was Hungry and You Fed Me...

As part of their ministry in the parish, Don and Chris decided to help with the Thanksgiving meal in the parish hall. Each year the prayer group and the St. Vincent de Paul Society sponsored a dinner for the poor and those who would be alone on Thanksgiving. Many families brought their whole dinners to the church hall on Thanksgiving Day, and Don and Chris helped to receive the food, set up the tables and chairs, and put out the dishes and utensils. Then, they helped pick up the people who had accepted the invitation to dinner. Serving the meal involved many parishioners, but it was still late in the afternoon by the time Don and Chris and all the other parish volunteers sat down to eat. They agreed that although they were exhausted, they would like to help again the following year. “It was all worth the effort,” said Chris, “when one older man told me it was the first time in ten years that he hadn’t eaten dinner alone on Thanksgiving Day.”

Discuss with your Sponsor:

Make certain you understand the above story. Spend two or three minutes in silence after reading it. Then discuss the following questions with your Sponsor:

1. How would you feel about spending Thanksgiving Day the way Chris and Don did?
2. Share three things for which you are grateful to God and why you feel this gratitude.
3. What are three ways you can show gratitude to God for all that He has given you? Do any of these ways involve serving others?

Your Mission

You have a mission right now. That mission is to live out, in the ordinary stuff of your daily life, your baptismal commitment to Jesus and His people. Your answers to the following inventory questions will tell you just what qualities you have going for you in the fulfillment of that calling. Answer honestly and discuss all the questions with your Sponsor:

1. You are asked to give up everything you own to help make this world a better place. How do you feel about this request?
   a) It is impossible.
   b) It is very difficult.
   c) It is quite easy.
2. What possession of yours would be the most difficult to part with? Why?
3. You’re about to leave for a weekend camping trip. A friend calls you and tells you that he/she needs to talk to you face-to-face at once [no cell phone involved here!]. What is your response?

4. A good friend of yours is trying out for a school team. You’re watching the tryout and your friend does a really poor job. He/she asks for your opinion. What would you say?

5. Name at least three activities you can do for long periods of time without getting tired or bored.

6. What mainly motivates you to do something for someone else?
   a) Fear
   b) Hope that the person will like you
   c) Hope that the person will do something for you in return
   d) A sense of “rightness”
   e) A real desire to meet someone’s needs
   f) An attempt to be a Christian in action

7. What does the word *service* mean to you?

8. How important is it for you to be a Christian? Explain and discuss.

9. Describe in one sentence what you think a good Christian is like.

10. What do you feel is your best quality as a Christian?

11. What is your greatest liability as a Christian?

12. Look at the following pairs and discuss which you would prefer to be:
   a) A star or an ordinary member of a team
   b) A follower or a leader
   c) A rock singer or a physician
   d) A volunteer for a charity or a paid consultant
   e) One who makes decisions or one who carries them out
   f) One who works alone or one who works with others
   g) An aide in a convalescent hospital or a social worker with youth gangs
   h) Behind the scenes or out in front

13. What do you wish to become in your future?

14. Name and discuss at least three things you need to do to accomplish this.

**Reflect…**

[Saint John Paul II, New Orleans, LA, September 12, 1987]

“To understand ourselves as members of a community, as individuals linked together to make up the People of God, as persons responsible for others, is a great insight—an insight that is necessary for fulfilling our mission properly.

As Christians, you have these insights and Christ today wants to reinforce them in you. You speak about “being partners” to God’s plan, according to which we are brothers and sisters in Christ—brothers and sisters who belong to the People of God and who are made to live in community, to think about others, to help others. Dear young people of America: in the Church there are many different gifts. There is room for many different cultures and ways of doing things. But there is no room in the Church for selfishness. There is no room in the world for selfishness. It destroys the meaning of life; it destroys the meaning of love; it reduces the human person to a subhuman level...

Your mission as young people today is to the whole world. In what sense? You can never forget the interdependence of human beings wherever they are. When Jesus tells us to love our neighbor, He does not set a geographical limit. What is needed today is a solidarity between all the young people of the world—a solidarity especially with the poor and all those in need. You young people must change society by your lives of justice and fraternal love. It is not just a question of your own country, but of the whole world. This is certainly your mission, dear young people. You are partners with each other, partners with the whole Church, partners with Christ.”
Respond...
1. Go back and review the results of your service inventory [see “Your Mission” above]. What have you learned about yourself? What, if anything, would you like to change in your answers?
2. Jesus is calling you to a life of service and invites you to become involved in His work. What are some real needs in your community that you can help meet?
3. Name and discuss three skills and talents that you have and how you can use those skills and talents to help others.

Dear Candidate,

For the past three months you have begun to explore your life story and hopefully to see more clearly who you are and where your personal journey is going. As a follower of Jesus, part of your story must include service. Service, or Christian ministry, is an extension of Jesus’ own mission and ministry to bring glad tidings, to heal, and to proclaim the good news of salvation. From the start, the Apostles and early disciples imitated the works of Jesus through service. Later in the early Church, all members were encouraged to perform actions that would build up the Body of Christ.

Your own service can take many forms, beginning right here in the parish. As Saint Paul teaches, the Spirit gives many gifts to individual members to enable them to serve in selfless ways. Before your next session, take some time to seriously reflect on the special gift for service that you have received. And remember, you are a very important person to the members of your parish!

Your Family in Christ

Pray...

Lord Jesus,
I realize that when I am confirmed,
I will have a job to do.
My job will be one of service.
You said that in Your kingdom,
caring for others is the job of all.
While I am getting ready,
help me learn my ministry—
to care for others,
to help the poor,
to make sad people happy,
to heal people who hurt,
to love even those who don’t love me.
Send Your Holy Spirit, and I will serve You.
We shall renew the face of the earth. Amen!

DECEMBER 2017 Response Sheet—Turn In This Page ONLY

Confirmation Candidate’s Name________________________________________________________

SPONSOR/MENTOR COMPLETE: I met with my Candidate named above on [date of meeting] _____ / _____ / _____

Our meeting was [check one]
☐ Face-to-face
☐ Over the telephone
☐ Over the internet [email, IM or SKYPE] _____ / _____ / _____

Sponsor’s Signature ___________________________ Date Signed _____ / _____ / _____

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY: DECEMBER 2017 Candidate/Sponsor Meeting

Date received in the Youth Ministry Office _____ / _____ / _____
As they bounded into the stadium for the third-round playoff game, each member of the football team was screaming, “Redemption, redemption, redemption!” That was the key word for the challenge they faced. Earlier in the week the word of the moment was “revenge.” The team wanted to erase the memories of a 41-7 defeat at the hands of their playoff opponent during the regular season. It marked the only loss of the season. Now was the time to get back, to rub noses in the dirt, to humiliate the rival team.

How did the word revenge change to redemption?

Enter Coach Nizzi, football coach for Boys Town High School in Nebraska, who didn’t equate victory simply with humiliating the opposition. No, Jesus had given a far better word to describe the challenge. That word is “redemption.”

Redemption is the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus, and your chance to share in it, no matter what your life circumstances are. God offers redemption so that you might fulfill your purpose in life as a Christian.

Redemption means to identify what is scarred, broken and in need of healing in your life. It means to bring these experiences to Jesus and to allow Him to mold you into a new creation, to teach you a new way to live.

For the Boys Town football team that night, the experience of redemption became one of openness. Each member gave his all while respecting the fact that the opponents also gave their best. The result? A final score of 15-14. Who do you think won?

Who’s a Winner?
Who wins and who loses always seems to require scorekeeping. In the eyes of the people of His time, Jesus was no winner. Indeed, it looked as if He was beaten down in death. The crucifixion was the final buzzer.

Jesus had taught over and over that death was never the winner, that death was not final. Yet, many of His closest friends didn’t get the message. They gave up, abandoned Him, leaving Him to face His greatest opponent alone and in great suffering. They didn’t understand that the road to redemption would first travel through suffering to the point of death.

Redemption Happens! Wouldn’t that be a great bumper sticker? Yet, what would it say to a world that experiences violence in so many ways?

It would be the rare person who, in searching through the family tree, would not hear stories of relatives who lie, cheat, steal, abuse alcohol and other drugs. You may have heard of cousins who committed acts of violence toward other family members, maybe even sexual abuse or the inward-turning violence of suicide.

Whenever you uncover the truth about violence in your own life, and in the lives of family members, you are presented with a choice.

The Old Testament Book of Deuteronomy puts it this way: “I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live, by loving the Lord, your God, heeding his voice, and holding fast to him” [30:19-20]. Redemption begins when you choose to pursue life over death.

Pursuing Life
Athletes often use the phrase, “No pain, no gain.” In this context, it is meant to encourage you to endure the pain of getting in top physical shape in order to be ready to compete.
This philosophy runs counter to the most basic motivating force present in the lives of even the youngest human beings. We all want to move from pain toward pleasure. What good, then, is pain? Pain lets you know that something is wrong. When you attend to your pain, you can decide to respond to it so that it will go away. Simple examples include taking aspirin for a headache or having your broken bone set. You can address the issue of pain intelligently.

Pain, however, can multiply. Painful event upon painful event can add up to a lifetime of suffering. At this point, suffering differs from pain. Janine [a composite of many abused young people] is an example of a person whose pain has crossed the line into suffering. Janine is a victim of sexual abuse within her family. She has suffered for years. She is filled with questions and doubts: “Why did this happen to me?” “Why do I hate myself?” “If there is a God, how could this happen to me?”

Janine is sexually acting out with just about every boy who pays any attention to her. She takes drugs to try to escape from both the physical and emotional pain of her life. How can she find redemption in the midst of her suffering?

You can find one answer in John’s Gospel: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” [1:1-5].

These words speak the truth about Jesus’ very nature—to be the light in the darkness. As humans, we may be inclined to believe that Jesus is only attracted to goodness in us, to the light in our words and deeds. Jesus also comes our way because we are in the dark.

Jesus’ choice to be a light in the darkness is best understood through the central teaching of the New Testament. This teaching is about redemption: the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus and our chance to share in it.

By using Jesus as a model for confronting and working through our own suffering, we discover a very useful skill: how to find meaning in suffering. Learning and practicing this skill is to tap into the real power of the Resurrection. That power is best expressed in the following equation: Joy [Resurrection] = Suffering that has been worked through.

This joy is discovered in suffering that has been thoroughly dealt with, not just dumped. Jesus did not toss the cross from His shoulder. Rather, He faced it. In doing so, Jesus gave each of us a new way to look at the purpose of suffering.

**Toward the Light**

What new purpose does suffering serve? Suffering, in the context of love, can lead to purification and education [new learning]. Let’s return to Janine in order to understand this more fully.

One day, Carla [a composite adult guide] steps into Janine’s life. She helps her get the proper care that she needs in order to address her suffering.

Carla commits herself to connecting Janine with the best available resources to promote healing and health. This includes spiritual resources. Carla even commits herself to being a mentor for Janine in her struggles.

As a result of Carla’s support, Janine begins to learn about God, about real love, about reading the Bible and about a new way of living. Janine comes to a point of conversion. This powerful experience of grace changes her entire way of looking at life.

Janine’s understanding of conversion tells her that she is “in Christ...a new creation” [2 Corinthians 5:17]. How does understanding this help her cope with her suffering?
Quite simply, Janine's conversion challenges her to embrace the truth about her past. She has, in fact, been sexually abused. She has been a drug abuser. She has engaged in indiscriminate sexual behavior.

Janine does not feel good about her past. She does not always see hope for a positive tomorrow. Still, Jesus invites her to state these facts, to name these truths, as one important step on the road to healing.

As Janine walks this road, she must learn new ways to behave and to make decisions. She must change her attitude toward other people if she is to form new relationships built on Christian principles.

When she has honestly faced her past, Janine must let go of her old ways. They must die. In this way, she begins to make some sense of her suffering. It has helped her begin to live in a new and healthy way.

As Janine is restored to physical, mental and spiritual health, she experiences real friendships for the first time. After several years of hard work learning new ways to relate to young men, she goes on her first real date. She and her date choose a good movie. Both watch the movie and enjoy the conversation and meal afterward. She is dropped off, thanks her date, shakes his hand and goes inside.

Janine feels good about herself. She sees concrete changes in her behavior. She is moving beyond living as a victim. She is now beginning to live as a redeemed person, a survivor of past suffering. Janine has tapped into the healing power of the Resurrection.

**Redemption Happens**

You may or may not identify directly with Janine's experience. Yet no one's life is exempt from suffering. Whether it is the death of a loved one, a tragic accident that leaves you permanently injured, the divorce of your parents or a broken relationship, every one of us has suffered and will suffer. How, then, can you find meaning in suffering? The key is to ask and search for the answers to two questions:

1. **What did I learn from suffering?** Did you learn something meaningful—or something meaningless—from your experience of suffering?
2. **How does suffering purify me [change me for the better]?**

These questions help you to recognize that there are two distinct ways to approach suffering; one leads to meaning, the other to meaninglessness.

Meaningless suffering tends to ignore these two questions. Such pain is marked by thinking, “Life is unfair,” “I am bad,” “I am powerless.” You may feel hurt, angry, hopeless, depressed and unloved. Your behaviors reflect how you think and feel. You act out violently toward others through words and actions or toward yourself by using drugs or attempting suicide.

In contrast, meaningful suffering embraces the opportunity to answer these questions. Even in your darkest moments you can find reasons to be hopeful and to recognize that you have power. You look to the present and the future as opportunities to grow. You know that you are loved by God. You learn that some family members, teachers and friends will support you through your trials. You don't act out violently or wallow in self-pity. You even reach out to others.

Discovering meaning in working through suffering models the actions of Jesus in His passion, death and resurrection. When Jesus was betrayed by Judas and Peter, He did not strike out at them. When He was beaten and crowned with thorns, He did not swear back or fight His tormentors.

On the way to the cross, Jesus accepted help from others. He allowed Simon to carry His cross with him. He allowed a woman to wipe His face. Ask yourself: Who do I allow to help me as I struggle to work through my suffering?

Jesus was then crucified. And how did He respond? He reached out to forgive His executioners, saying, “**Father, forgive them, they know not what they do**” [Luke 23:34]. Jesus modeled the ultimate power of God, of redemption, in forgiving the very people who thought they had the power to have the last word in His life.
Forgiveness is not an easy skill to practice. It often can take much time, even years in the case of abuse victims, to work through the experience of forgiveness. Yet, when that moment arrives, the true power of Christ’s presence is in the hands of the one who forgives, not in the hands of the one who victimizes.

Jesus reached out one last time to the thief hanging on the cross next to Him. When this criminal spoke out in defense of Jesus, he was invited to share in the glory of redemption.

When you reach out to others despite your own pain, you are like Christ. You, too, will reflect that light in the darkness, the same darkness Jesus swallowed up by dying, and shattered by rising again.

**The Final Score**
What of our football game? Coach Nizzi’s team came out on the short end of the score. They lost a second game to their opponents, though just by one point. So—where’s the redeeming victory in this defeat?

Quite simply, redemption had moved from word to action [and the Word became flesh]. The team discovered that they were up to the challenge. They rose up from the humiliation of their first defeat and played their hearts out.

As with the crucifixion of Jesus, the numbers on the scoreboard did not tell the final score. The buzzer may have sounded, but its deeper meaning was just starting to sink in.

The game was over, but a new season in their lives was just beginning. Redemption does indeed happen!

**Discuss the following questions with your Sponsor:**
1. As you continue through formation for celebrating Confirmation and begin/continue to recognize the need for some changes in your life, how can you move toward redemption with old influences around everywhere?
2. Sometimes when we try to change we seem to move backward. How can you learn to recognize your failures, make sense of them, and continue to move toward redemption?
3. How can you help someone else the way Carla helped Janine?

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**JANUARY 2018 Response Sheet—Turn In This Page ONLY**

**Confirmation Candidate’s Name**

PLEASE PRINT

**SPONSOR/MENTOR COMPLETE:**
I met with my Candidate named above on [date of meeting] [ ]

Our meeting was [check one]
- Face-to-face
- Over the telephone
- Over the internet [email, IM or SKYPE]

Sponsor’s Signature __________________________ Date Signed ________ / ______ / ______

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY: January 2018 Candidate/Sponsor Meeting

Date received in the Youth Ministry Office ________ / ______ / ______