

Inter-Parish Religious Formation

St. Joseph and St. Mary Parishes
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IPRF, forming
families of disciples
by nourishing them with
the Word of God.

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Confirmation

Sponsor

Handbook

edited / revised 2011

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SPONSOR EXPECTATIONS

1. **Candidates are Confirmed, practicing Roman Catholics.** The Sponsor is someone who represents the Church community and says that the person is ready to complete his or her initiation in the Roman Catholic Church. Sponsors are also role models for young people of how a practicing Roman Catholic should live, pray, worship, and believe.
2. **Write a personal letter of affirmation to the candidate for her/his summer retreat.** Mail it to the IPRF Office with the Candidate's name in the lower left corner one week prior to his or her retreat.
3. **Have at least 5 hours of discussion** with your candidate between May and August. Complete at least one discussion activity from each of the five topics in this manual. **Turn in the five summary sheets to the IPRF Office by August 1st.** These summary sheets are found at the back of this manual.
4. **Write a letter of recommendation** for the candidate regarding your candidate's readiness to receive the Sacrament (see sample at the back of the manual). **This letter should also be sent to the IPRF Office by August 1st.**
5. Together with the candidate decide whether or not the candidate will request Confirmation from the Bishop. **Be aware that the candidate will write a letter to the Bishop requesting the Sacrament of Confirmation.** (See sample in the back of the manual.)
6. Periodically through the summer and fall, check with your candidate regarding his/her fulfillment of the candidate expectations.
7. **Attend the Practice for Confirmation and the Confirmation Mass.**
8. Continue your presence in the Confirmant's life!

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

- _____ CANDIDATE / SPONSOR interview with IPRF Staff: Jan. 17 – Feb. 12
- _____ Candidate's blessing at Mass: Feb. 18 - 19
- _____ CANDIDATE Confirmation Retreat: June 15 or August 5.
- _____ SPONSOR/CANDIDATE complete discussions and summary sheets due: **August 1.**
- _____ SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION letter due **August 1.**
- _____ CANDIDATE interview with Parish Staff: make appointment by **August 1.**
- _____ SPONSOR/CANDIDATE Confirmation Practice (**Mid Oct.**) @ **St. Mary Church**
- _____ SPONSOR/CANDIDATE/PARENTS Celebrate Confirmation (**Oct.**) @ **St. Mary.**

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION TO SPONSORS

I. NATURE AND PURPOSE

You serve as a mentor (guide, coach, experienced companion) helping the candidate grow in those skills, knowledge, attitudes and practices that are considered essential to being a committed (Confirmed) member of the Church, a professed follower of Jesus.

This sponsor program is modeled after the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, a longer and more involved period of preparation for adults seeking Baptism/Confirmation, or joining the Church from another faith. The process is called the catechumenate.

If you are like most people who have been asked to serve as sponsors, you feel both flattered and a little unsure of your ability to “teach” the faith. Many Catholics are humble about their faith and do not present themselves as fully informed, totally dedicated Catholics. Our Catholic Faith tradition is so deep and rich that many do not feel completely suited for guiding others.

Keep three things in mind about your role as sponsor:

First, your candidate freely chose you, so he/she must feel you have some basic qualities and experience that can help the candidate grow.

Second, you are asked to be somewhat more mature, more informed and more experienced than the candidate. No one, least of all the candidate, expects perfection of you. Just a willingness to share and to continue to grow in your own faith.

Third, it is important to be as realistic toward the candidate as you are toward yourself. The goal of this program is *GROWTH*, not *PERFECTION* for the candidate. Readiness for Confirmation requires that the candidate demonstrate a willingness and a capacity to continue to grow toward mature and committed faith. The actual goal of perfected faith and total imitation of Jesus remains a lifelong quest. Your task is to help the candidate take the next step in that quest, not the final step.

If you properly understand the Sponsorship component of the preparation process you will realize that you probably have all the necessary qualities for assisting your candidate.

That confidence, coupled with the personal investment of your time - and humble prayer for the Holy Spirit's assistance will ensure that the program will be a successful and rewarding experience for both the candidate and you.

II. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS WITH YOUR CANDIDATE

Instructions: Decide with your candidate the dates, times and places when you will be able to meet and do the activities described in this manual. Record the information below.

NOTE: You do not have to take topics in the order presented in the manual. However, you are asked to cover five (5) topics during the course of the program. Also, you can hold more than one meeting on the same topic if you feel it necessary, or have additional meetings on topics regarding candidate concerns and questions.

	<u>DATE</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>TOPIC (S)</u>
1.	_____	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____
7.	_____	_____	_____	_____
8.	_____	_____	_____	_____
9.	_____	_____	_____	_____
10.	_____	_____	_____	_____

SUMMARY SHEETS (LAST 5 PAGES OF BOOKLET) DUE
AUGUST 1st

PART TWO: SESSIONS WITH YOUR CANDIDATE

General Instructions:

- 1) Using one or more of the activities suggested for a given topic, seek to determine the candidate's present knowledge, attitude and/or behavior related to that topic. Activities contained within the topic area are primarily meant to serve as tools/aids/catalysts for discussion on that specific topic, or to surface other "faith/religion" topics.
- 2) To the degree that there is need for growth in a given area, discuss possible actions the youth could take to improve in that area.
- 3) Also offer praise and encouragement for growth already achieved.
- 4) As necessary, agree on assignments to be completed before the next session.
- 5) Complete a summary sheet. Be brief and concise so that the pastor, final interviewer, or director of the Confirmation program can read all summary sheets.

TOPIC ONE: KNOWLEDGE OF OUR FAITH

(Teachings and Practices of the Church)

AIM: To be a responsible, effective member of the faith community it is necessary to have a basic awareness and acceptance of that community's tradition and practices.

BACKGROUND: Obviously, one could study for a lifetime and still not fully know all that could be learned about the Church, its teachings and its traditions. Therefore, during this program it is sufficient to focus on what can be considered the most basic truths related to being a practicing Catholic. Also, there is a difference between knowing and accepting a truth of faith.

Even very young children are often able to memorize catechism answers. In this program we want the candidates to move beyond memorization and foster understanding and acceptance of these truths. The truths of our faith will then be guiding principles for them through adulthood.

Typically, youth can find it difficult to accept certain teachings of the Church. Hopefully your candidate will be honest in expressing such difficulties if they exist. For your part, do not be surprised if you do not feel fully equipped to answer some of these challenges. Be willing to seek outside help if necessary.

Also, keep in mind the difference between essential beliefs of the faith community and less important aspects of the tradition. For example, an inability to accept the divinity of Jesus is more critical than having a problem with the importance of holy water. Focus attention on the essentials at this point in the youth's development.

ACTIVITIES: Use one or more of the following suggested activities as aids to your discussion with your candidate.

Before you begin work on this topic of Knowledge of Faith, ask the Candidate to share his or her response to the question:

“Why do you personally want to be Catholic or remain a Catholic?”

TOPIC ONE: ACTIVITY 1A: THE CREED

Instructions: Read through the Nicene Creed together, one article at a time. Each article is separated by a space. Together mark with an “X” each article that you and/or the candidate need to discuss in order to clarify its meaning. Mark with an “O” each article the youth may be having some trouble accepting. No mark indicates that the article is understood and accepted.

As time permits, discuss each article so marked.

If necessary, agree on what further study you need to do together.

NICENE CREED

I Believe

- in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible..
- And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made.

For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

- And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.
- And one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins

and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

TOPIC ONE: ACTIVITY 1B: BASIC BELIEFS

Instructions:

1. Read through each of the ten sets of statements together, one statement at a time.
2. Then ask your candidate to explain what the statement seems to mean, using his/her own words. Share what you think it means.
3. Ask your candidate if he/she has any trouble accepting the truth of the statement. Share your beliefs. Discuss as necessary.
4. Ask your candidate what day-to-day relevance this particular statement has in living a responsible Christian life.

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- I. **Revelation** - God reveals himself to humanity through all creation, through the events of human history, especially the history of Israel and through His Word and Son, Jesus Christ. God's revelation is recorded in the Bible.
 - II. **The Church** - The Church consists of those people who profess belief in Jesus as Lord and God and who are baptized into his life. This faith community has three tasks: to worship God together in the celebration of the Eucharist (Mass); to proclaim what Jesus has done for humanity to all who will listen (share the Good News of our salvation through Jesus) and to build the Kingdom of God here on earth, by working to bring about justice and care for the sick and needy. Jesus remains present on earth through the life of this faith community.
 - III. **Sacrament** - The Church recalls certain actions of Jesus when he walked on earth. The Church does this by means of certain objects, gestures, and words (signs). In doing this Jesus actually **becomes present** under these signs and touches our lives in the same way he touched the lives of the people during his earthly life.

There are seven such Sacraments:

Baptism - we participate in Jesus' death and resurrection, dying to sin and being raised to life in Jesus. It is through Baptism that we become members of the Church.

Confirmation - we are empowered by the Spirit of God who seeks to strengthen, encourage and guide us in living the life of Jesus to the fullest extent possible.

Eucharist - we celebrate a ritual meal which enables us to participate in Jesus's last supper, his death and his resurrection. The bread and wine actually become Christ's body and blood. We offer these and our lives in sacrifice to the Father and share in them at Communion.

The Mass has two main parts:

- (a) Liturgy of the Word (readings)
- (b) Liturgy of the Eucharist

Reconciliation - by confessing those times when we have sinned / failed to love, Jesus forgives us through the ministry of the priest.

Marriage - believing couples enter marriage in the name and in the presence of Jesus. Each brings Christ's loving presence to the other. Their love creates new life for themselves, children, and the community.

Holy Orders- persons are changed spiritually, and designated to participate in the ministry of Jesus in an official way. They are empowered to lead the Church in Jesus' name and to celebrate the sacraments.

Anointing of the Sick - Jesus cares for the sick members of the community, strengthening them spiritually and in some cases physically.

- IV. **Grace** - Grace means the gift of God's presence. We receive Grace through the sacraments, and in our daily lives. We become open to Grace through faith and through informed participation in the celebration of the sacraments. God gives us the gift of friendship and shares the life of the Father, Son and Spirit with us.
- V. **Creed** - A concise summary of all that the Church or faith community believes is found in the Creed. We say the Nicene Creed or Apostles Creed at Mass. We also say the Apostles' Creed at children's liturgies and when praying the rosary.
- VI. **Personal Immortality and Personal Resurrection** - Catholics believe that every person has an immortal soul and that even the body will be raised up again and transformed into perfection after death. In other words, we believe we will live forever.
- VII. **Christian Morality** - Jesus revealed to us what it means to be fully human and gave us an example of how a fully human person lives. It can be summarized in this way, "Love God, love one another." This love is described in the Ten Commandments.
- VIII. **Church Authority and Dogmas** - Bishops, in union with the Pope, are official leaders of the Church who have two special tasks:
1. Ensure that the revelation God has given us is not corrupted or distorted as it is handed down to each new generation
 2. Help the faith community continue to grow in the correct understanding of what God has revealed.
- Hence bishops are considered official teachers. Their official teachings, which all faithful believers accept as true, are called the dogmas of the Church.
- IX. **Salvation and the Church** - Salvation is offered to all people by God. The Church is the means through which salvation is offered to humanity. However, people can be saved "outside the Church". To achieve their salvation they must strive to believe in God and follow God's will for them according to the Graces bestowed on them. This assumes the person does not have the opportunity to come to know Jesus or to recognize his Church as the true Church.
- X. **Sin** - Sin is knowingly, deliberately, and with full freedom acting contrary to what is true and good. (Sin through actions) Sin is failing to love, failing to do what we know is the right thing to do. (Sin through omissions)

TOPIC ONE: ACTIVITY 1C: SCRIPTURE SEARCH

Instructions: Look up and read five of the Scripture passages listed below. Discuss in terms of:

- 1) What does it really mean? What do you understand by it?
- 2) What practical implications does it have for how we live out our Christianity?

Genesis 1:26-31

Luke 1:26-35

Genesis 3:1-7

Luke 22: 19-20

Exodus 20:1-17

Mark 16:1-7

Matthew 25:31-46

1 Corinthians 15:1-8

John 1:1-14

Ephesians 2:11-22

John 6:52-59

TOPIC ONE: ACTIVITY 1D: ESSENTIALS

Instructions: Read each of the following statements, asking your candidate to describe his/her present attitude toward it by choosing one of these three positions:

1. I believe it is true and I think I could explain it to others.
2. I believe it is true but I do not really understand it that well.
3. I am having trouble accepting it as really true.

Once your candidate has chosen a response to a statement, share your response and then discuss both of your responses.

STATEMENTS:

1. God created the universe and continues to hold it in existence and exercise control over it without interfering with our free will.
2. All humanity has participated in sin to some degree and needs God's help to achieve salvation.
3. Jesus is the only Son of God, fully divine and fully human.
4. It is through Jesus, his teachings, his example and ultimately his saving death and resurrection that all people have access to the redemption offered by God.
5. Though all churches and religions can help people find Jesus and the salvation offered by God, the Church founded by Jesus through his Apostles is the Catholic Church.
6. Though the Roman Catholic Church has a history of faults and weaknesses, for me it is still the best means I have to know about God and to become the fully human person God intends me to become.
7. The Holy Spirit descended on the Church at Pentecost, and remains with us, guiding us and keeping us faithful to the teachings of Jesus.
8. The Sacraments have the power to put me in direct contact with the risen Jesus and to experience his saving actions just as truly as if I had lived and walked with him 2,000 years ago.
9. There is an immortal life after death for everyone.
10. Life after death (and will be spent either with God and the Saved in Heaven, or with the damned, eternally separated from God in Hell).

TOPIC TWO: PRAYER AND SPIRITUAL LIFE

AIM: Prayer is an essential skill for effective membership in the faith community and for maintaining an overall Christian lifestyle.

BACKGROUND: The focus is on possessing and developing those skills and habits that will lead the youth to closer identification with Jesus over the years. Young people should develop a closer relationship with Jesus at their level. We do not expect instant sanctification.

How one prays is not as critical as that one prays. Your discussion with your candidate, therefore, should focus on nurturing a positive attitude toward prayer and helping him/her develop a style of praying that is suitable for him/her at this point in life.

The overall spiritual life involves us in both positive practices and in a program of self-discipline aimed at rooting out or curbing weaknesses and bad habits we may possess. In your discussion with your candidate, try to maintain that balance between nurturing the good that is already there and curbing negative elements that may be present.

ACTIVITIES: Use one or more of the following activities as aids in your discussion with the candidate.

Before you begin your work on this topic of **Prayer**, ask the Candidate to share his or her response to the question:

“What do you think is meant by “awakening” to the Spirit? Are we asleep spiritually? In what ways might we be described as “sleepwalking” through life?”

TOPIC TWO: ACTIVITY 2A: NATURE OF PRAYER

Have the teen / candidate complete this page and discuss it with you, the sponsor.

Instructions: Based on your understanding of what prayer is, reflect for a while and then list three occasions when you feel you had a really good prayer experience (when you really prayed well).

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Examine each of those three occasions, trying to identify what each had in common. List all the common elements you identify. (e.g., "In each of the three occasions I was in an outdoor or nature setting".)

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

How can you include these elements in your future prayer?

TOPIC TWO: ACTIVITY 2B: DEVELOPING A PRAYER LIFE

Instructions: The teen candidate fills out this sheet and discusses it with the sponsor. Imagine you have a younger brother or sister who is just entering high school next year. He or she notices that you have begun to take greater interest in prayer and asks for advice about developing a prayer life too.

What advice would you give in each of the following areas:

- 1) How often to pray:

- 2) The best place to pray:

- 3) The best method for praying:

- 4) The best time for praying:

- 5) The best aids for praying (books, music, poetry, Scripture, etc.):

- 6) Traps to look out for:

- 7) What to expect from praying:

- 8) Why to even try:

TOPIC TWO: ACTIVITY 2C: SCRIPTURE SEARCH: PRAYER

Instructions: Read together 4 or 5 of the following Scripture passages about prayer and then discuss them in light of these questions:

- 1) What does it seek to teach us about prayer?

- 2) Does my own prayer reflect that teaching? Should it?

- 3) What can I do to insure that my prayer will possess the quality described in the Scripture passage?

Luke 22:39-46

Matthew 6:5-15

Mark 1:35

Matthew 17:14-21

Mark 7:24-30

Matthew 18:19-20

TOPIC TWO: ACTIVITY 2D: SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Instructions: Below are listed some kinds of behavior which give most people some trouble in terms of needing more self-discipline. The teen / candidate puts an X in front of each where (s)he feels (s)he could use a little more self-discipline. Put an O in front of each where (s)he feels (s)he is in pretty good control most of the time. Use the "other" lines to write in a behavior not listed that is giving her/him some trouble right now.

_____ eating

_____ alcohol or other drugs

_____ physical exercise

_____ school work/study

_____ helping at home

_____ relation to parents

_____ relation to brothers/sisters

_____ backbiting/put-downs

_____ bragging

_____ Other (list) _____

_____ Other (list) _____

_____ Other (list) _____

From those marked with an X choose the one you feel would be the best place for you to start a program of personal discipline. Begin to think of ways you could go about improving in that area.

Discuss your list and your choice with your sponsor and then together work out a plan of action.

TOPIC THREE: LITURGY AND COMMUNAL WORSHIP

AIM: Communal worship is at the very heart of the faith community's life and one of the most essential sources for its vitality. Confirmation in a real sense implies a sincere commitment to this dimension of one's faith life.

BACKGROUND: It is not uncommon for your candidate - and many adults - to have difficulty in their efforts to experience Liturgy and Reconciliation as meaningful, energizing and inspiring celebrations they are intended to be.

The music and homily are often the first items that a person thinks about when considering meaningful and energizing prayer. But our hope is that a mature Catholic Christian can find meaning in every Sacrament celebration. Often a more developed awareness of the real nature and significance of these communal celebrations are the skills needed to participate effectively.

In your discussions with your candidate on this topic, attempt to pinpoint the causes for any difficulties he/she may be experiencing and deal with them as best you can.

As stated in connection with the other topics, do not expect perfection, whereby every Liturgy becomes for the youth an experience of "spiritual fireworks". It is sufficient to nurture in the youth a commitment and a willingness to do his / her part to make communal worship a central part of his/her ongoing life as a Christian.

ACTIVITIES: Use one or more of the following suggested activities as aids in your discussion of this topic with your candidate.

Before you begin your work on this topic of Worship, ask the Candidate to share his or her response to the question:

"Can you recall a particular time when receiving the Eucharist (Communion) was for you an experience of grace or somehow 'opened your eyes?'"

TOPIC THREE: ACTIVITY 3A: EXAMINE ATTITUDES ABOUT EUCHARIST AND RECONCILIATION

Instructions: Discuss attendance patterns at Sunday Liturgy or participation in the Sacrament of Reconciliation with your Candidate. Hopefully, there is a consistent pattern of participation in the Candidate preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation. Choose, read and discuss one of the following articles should there be any difficulties:

The Sunday Zone: Keeping the Lord's day Holy (regarding Mass / Eucharist) found at this url, <http://www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/YU/ay0301.asp> or

Guilt: Name It, Claim It, Clear it Up! (regarding Reconciliation) Found at this url, <http://www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/YU/ay0600.asp>

The Sunday Zone: Keeping the Lord's Day Holy:

1. Ask the candidate what they remember from the previous Sunday's Mass: the readings, a phrase, the homily, the music, a line of music, a feeling? Did it feel like time spent with Jesus?---why or why not?
2. Draw seven boxes across the length of a piece of paper. Think for a moment of the main activities of your life and fill them in the boxes. What kinds of activities happen regularly? What things make up the pulse of life of your week? Try not to focus on the changeable but on those habits which make you who you are and that you hope will continue for a lifetime. Why are life rhythms important? In what ways does worship and a sense of Sabbath contribute to the rhythm?
3. In the Jewish Sabbath meal, there is a very special family focus. Ask the candidate what is going on in the life of each of their family members right now (stresses, joys, sorrows, etc.) Discuss how Sunday worship and a sense of Sabbath can contribute to a sense of special caring for one's family and friends. How can weekly participation in the Mass and a sense of Sabbath actually make you a better person?

Guilt: Name It, Claim It, Clear it Up!!

1. Think of a recent time when you have offended someone... Share with each other. What are the ways we tend to hurt each other the most? Discuss the moral standards we see at home, at school, in the media and in society?
2. Read the article. How does the author's sense of guilt compare to yours? Why does one feel guilty after offending someone. Is guilt good? How does it affect your conscience?
3. Fold a piece of paper. Write **Past** on one side and **Future** on another. On the Past side, write what you have done to feel guilty. On the Future side, write what you will do to deal with the guilt. Ask, "How can the Sacrament of Reconciliation help to deal with the guilt?" discuss how self respect can decrease when one ignores healthy guilt. Honestly discuss what might keep a person from admitting wrongdoing. How can a perspective not only of God's love but of healthy self-love encourage us to admit we have done wrong?

TOPIC THREE: ACTIVITY 3C: ON BEING EUCHARIST

Instructions: Read the following reflection together. Discuss these questions:

1. What is the meaning of this reflection? What is the connection(s) between this reflection and what we do at Liturgy on the weekend?
2. How has someone “given you Eucharist” in a figurative way, outside the context of Liturgy? How have you been Eucharist to someone recently outside the context of Liturgy?
3. What is the importance of the concept that is presented in this reflection?

He was old, tired, sweaty, pushing his homemade cart down the alley, stopping now and then to poke around in somebody's garbage. I wanted to tell him about Eucharist, but the look in his eyes, the despair on his face, the hopelessness of somebody else's life in his cart, told me to forget it. So I smiled, said "Hi!" - and gave him Eucharist.

She lived alone, her husband dead, her family gone, and she talked at you, not to you; words, endless words, spewed out. So I listened - and gave her Eucharist.

Downtown is nice, lights change from red to green and back again. Flashing blues, pinks, and oranges. I gulped them in, said "Thank you, Father" - and made them Eucharist.

I laughed at myself, and told myself,
"You with all your sin, all your selfishness, I forgive you, I accept you, I love you".
It's nice - and so very necessary too - to give yourself Eucharist.

Tired, weary, disgusted, lonely, go to your friends, open their door, say, "Look at me" - and receive their Eucharist.

My Father, when will we learn we cannot talk Eucharist,
cannot philosophize about it - we do it!
We don't dogmatize Eucharist; sometimes we laugh it, sometimes we cry it,
often we sing it.
Sometimes it's a wild peace, then crying hurt, often humiliating, never deserved. We see Eucharist in another's eyes, give it in another's hand held tight, squeeze it in an embrace.

We pause Eucharist in the middle of a busy day, speak Eucharist with a million things to do and a person who wants to talk.

For Eucharist is as simple as being on time, and as profound as sympathy.

I give you my supper,
 I give you my sustenance,
 I give you my life,
 I give you me,
 I give you. . .Eucharist.

(Author unknown) – Quoted by Zanzig, Thomas and Barbara Allaire, Understanding Catholic Christianity, St. Mary's Press, Winona MN, 1997, p. 88

TOPIC THREE: ACTIVITY 3D: RECONCILIATION

Instructions: Openly share your own experience and invite your candidate to do the same on the following aspects of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Penance).

- 1) How important do you feel the Sacrament should be in the everyday life of a mature Christian? Why?

- 2) Why do you personally think Jesus made this an integral part of his Church's life?

- 3) Is your experience of the Sacrament generally a positive one or a negative one? Why?

- 4) What do you find the most difficult aspect of it and what do you do about it?

- 5) How do you personally feel about this rather common reaction to confessing one's sins to a priest:

I can talk to God directly when I'm sorry.
I don't see why I should have to tell my sins to some priest.

After your discussion arrange to attend a Reconciliation service together if at all possible. In any event, it is strongly encouraged that each candidate approach a priest in the Sacrament of Reconciliation at some point during the final stage of preparation for Confirmation (an opportunity will be given to receive the Sacrament at the Confirmation Rehearsal).

TOPIC FOUR: STEWARDSHIP

AIM: An integral part of committed membership in the Church is sharing in the day to day fellowship and concerns of the local parish community, and being willing to share one's own time, treasure and talent in response to the needs experienced by the community.

BACKGROUND: It may be some time before youth will fully enter the mainstream of parish life.

Nevertheless, it is not too early to nurture an appreciation for the parish and for the importance of gradually assuming active responsibility within it.

In the same way, effective involvement in ministry usually requires specialized training and specific gifts. It is premature to expect youth to have acquired the training. Often special gifts are not yet fully recognized.

For that reason, focus here should be on services of a less formal kind. In this regard, keep in mind that the focus is on developing an attitude toward service more than doing some particular thing on a one time basis simply to fulfill a requirement.

Candidates have already committed to a particular area of Christian service / stewardship. The goal is to help the youth realize that responsible Christianity implies a commitment to a lifetime of service to others, not just "how-many-hours" to complete a requirement. Our program sets a minimal number of hours. However, we are more concerned with lifestyles, attitude, and level of involvement which treats all of our time, gifts, talents and resources as gifts from God. We gratefully return a portion of these to God in the form of Christian service.

ACTIVITIES: Use one or more of the following suggested activities as an aid to discussing this topic with your candidate.

Before you begin your work on this topic of **Stewardship**, ask the Candidate to share his or her response to the question:

“What is the work of the Church and how do you feel a part of it?”

TOPIC FOUR: ACTIVITY 4B: TIME AND TALENT

Instructions: List three talents you feel you have, even if they are not yet fully developed, that could be of some benefit to your parish community.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Now identify one practical way you could actually put each talent to use within the parish community.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What problems or obstacles do you feel could prevent you from actually putting your talents to use within the parish?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

TOPIC FOUR: ACTIVITY 4C: FIND A NEED AND FILL IT

Instructions: Review the following list with your candidate. Decide on an area of involvement that you could do together - a "one time" event. Make a commitment together and then decide who's going to inquire, drive, etc. When finished, complete the following questions:

1. Describe how you felt about your service? Would you do it again?
2. What did you like best about this service?
3. What did you like least about this service?
4. Give an example of an effect you had on the people you served?
5. Give an example of an effect the people had on you?

EXAMPLES OF FOX VALLEY AGENCIES in need of VOLUNTEERS:

Any area Nursing Home is always in need of smiling faces and listening ears.
Call Franciscan Care – 993-6800 or Manor Care @ 731-6646 as places to begin.

Boys and Girls Club of the Fox Valley can always use helpers, mentors, tutors.
Call 731-0555 for suggestions as to where you can help.

St. Joseph's Food Pantry @ 734-9461,
the Community Clothes Closet @ 731-7834 or
St. Vincent DePaul @ 739-1679
can always use helping hands and hearts to tend to the needy.

Salvation Army @ 734-3324 and
Fr. Carr's Place 2 B in Oshkosh @ 920-231-2378
can use your willingness to help them feed the hungry.

Harbor House (Domestic Abuse) can use general help and baby-sitters @ 832-1667 as can
Emergency Shelter @ 734-9192.

TOPIC FOUR: ACTIVITY 4D: TIME, TALENT AND TREASURE

Instructions: Under each of the categories, help your candidate identify what he/she is already doing to share his/her time, talents and treasure (money).

Then decide together what more can/should be done in these areas in response to each Christian's vocation to be servant to others.

Evaluate how the candidate is presently spending whatever time, talent and treasure (money) he/she has available. One's values and priorities become clear in the process.

What am I doing with my time?

Determine how the candidate spends time each week. Try to discover what percent of the candidate's time is spent each week helping other people. Start with general activities like school and sports, move to more specific activities like tutoring another student at school.

What am I doing with my talent?

List particular talents that the candidate has. What are ways that the talents can be used to help others know that God loves them?

What am I doing with my treasure?

For one week make a list of all expenditures, including savings / college fund. What percent of the candidate's money was given to charity?

TOPIC FIVE: WITNESS

AIM: To be a confirmed member of the faith community requires a willingness to "go public" and to make Jesus visible to society at large by one's own actions and behavior.

BACKGROUND:

For youth - and many adults - witness essentially means giving good example to one's peers. It means being willing, by both word and action to demonstrate to others what Jesus stands for and to oppose those evils which destroy the rights and dignity of others.

This is no easy task. All of us are vulnerable to peer pressure. It is seldom easy to go against the grain and to risk alienation and ridicule by upholding one's convictions.

Yet, that is precisely what Confirmation as Christians requires of us.

While being realistic in what we can expect of youth, we should never hesitate to challenge them to respond to this call to demonstrate and uphold the truth and values Jesus is sharing with us.

While the previous topic, Stewardship, and this topic are similar, the focus in "Witness" is on our day to day - minute to minute - choices and decisions. Complimenting the previous topic, this topic challenges us to look at how we live our daily lives. When someone meets one of us, do they see a disciple of Jesus?

Before you begin work on this topic of Witness/Good Example, ask the Candidate to share his or her response to the question:

“What behaviors, habits, possessions or relationships keep you from a closer relationship with God?

What behaviors, habits, and relationships help you to form a closer relationship with God? ”

TOPIC FIVE: ACTIVITY 5A: GOOD EXAMPLE

Instructions: Think back over the past two weeks and try to identify at least five occasions when you were in a position to give witness or good example (regardless of what you actually did). Describe them below.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Now identify three possible ways you could give witness in the next two weeks in the ordinary situations at home, school, etc.

1.

2.

3.

TOPIC FIVE: ACTIVITY 5B: STRENGTHS FOR WITNESS

Instructions: Based on your own experience, rank what you personally consider to be three biggest strengths that help you to "give witness" to your faith among your peers.

_____ Strong friendships

_____ Self esteem

_____ Leadership qualities

_____ Hard working

_____ Willpower

_____ Personal integrity

_____ Responsible

_____ Faith that God will work in other people when you witness

_____ Knowledge - knowing your faith well enough to discuss it publically

_____ Other (describe) _____

_____ Other (describe) _____

_____ Other (describe) _____

Discuss results together.

What are some strengths that you would like to develop in order to better share your faith with others?

TOPIC FIVE: ACTIVITY 5C: SCRIPTURE SEARCH: CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE

Instructions: Read together 5 or 6 of the following passages and then discuss them together in light of these questions:

- 1) What is Jesus really asking of his followers in terms of lifestyles?
- 2) Is it realistic to expect people to act like that? Why or why not?
- 3) To what degree is that principle part of my own lifestyle? What do I need to do, if anything, to improve in this area?

Luke 12:22-34

Matthew 5:21-24

Luke 17:7-10

Matthew 5:27-30

Luke 17:11-19

Matthew 5:38-42

Luke 18:18-30

Matthew 5:43-48

Luke 19:1-10

Matthew 6:1-4

LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

Instructions: Please compose a letter similar to one of the letters below and return to the Director of the Confirmation Program **by August 1.**

NOTE: These are samples. Please, write your own letter of Recommendation - using your own words - and include specific reasons for your particular recommendation.

Dear members of (St. Mary or St. Joseph) Parish:

As the sponsor of (insert candidates name), I attest to the candidate's sincerity and effort in striving to develop the qualities we have a right to expect of members of our faith community. I therefore personally recommend that the candidate be Confirmed as a member of the Roman Catholic Church. As an example that (candidate's name) is ready for Confirmation, (list some reasons candidate is ready).

Respectfully,

Date: _____

Dear members of _____ Parish:

After discussion with _____, a candidate for Confirmation as a member of the Roman Catholic Church, we have decided that it is best that his/her Confirmation be postponed until a later date.

Respectfully,

Date: _____

**DUE
AUGUST 1st**

CANDIDATE LETTER TO THE BISHOP

The following are the instructions that we give to the candidate's for writing their letter to the Bishop requesting Confirmation.

Letters to the Bishop should be typed and hand signed. Use the same care that you would for a business letter or job application cover letter. The length should be approximately one page in length. Use nice stationary if you have it.

Heading: Address your letter, "Dear Bishop _____ (we will not know which bishop until May),"

Introduction: Introduce yourself. Describe who you are, your name, some personal information, what your interests and hopes for the future are.

Body:

1. Indicate why you are writing (to ask for the Sacrament)
2. Describe what you have done to prepare for Confirmation, and what part of the preparation had the most meaning for you.
3. Share information regarding parents or sponsors or others who have influenced your decision to be Confirmed.
4. How will receiving the Holy Spirit in Confirmation make a difference in your life?
5. What difference will you make in the Church; and what difference will your generation make in the Church?
6. Summarize your desire to be Confirmed. Point to a definite reason that you want Confirmation. Make a formal request for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Closing:

Thank the Bishop; express your interest in meeting him.

Close with..."Sincerely," or another appropriate closing, and sign your name

**DUE
AUGUST 1st**

SUMMARY SHEET

TOPIC ONE: KNOWLEDGE OF OUR FAITH

I. Jot down your impression of your candidate's present state of faith development in relation to this topic.

II. What specific tasks/assignments have you asked your candidate to work on in relation to this topic:

III. What follow up did you do in relationship to this topic?

**DUE
AUGUST 1st**

SUMMARY SHEET

TOPIC TWO: PRAYER AND THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

IV. Jot down your impression of your candidate's present state of faith development in relation to this topic.

V. What specific tasks/assignments have you asked your candidate to work on in relation to this topic:

VI. What follow up did you do in relationship to this topic?

**DUE
AUGUST 1st**

SUMMARY SHEET

TOPIC THREE: LITURGY AND COMMUNAL WORSHIP

VII. Jot down your impression of your candidate's present state of faith development in relation to this topic.

VIII. What specific tasks/assignments have you asked your candidate to work on in relation to this topic:

IX. What follow up did you do in relationship to this topic?

**DUE
AUGUST 1st**

SUMMARY SHEET

TOPIC FOUR: STEWARDSHIP

X. Jot down your impression of your candidate's present state of faith development in relation to this topic.

XI. What specific tasks/assignments have you asked your candidate to work on in relation to this topic:

XII. What follow up did you do in relationship to this topic?

**DUE
AUGUST 1st**

SUMMARY SHEET

TOPIC FIVE: WITNESS

XIII. Jot down your impression of your candidate's present state of faith development in relation to this topic.

XIV. What specific tasks/assignments have you asked your candidate to work on in relation to this topic:

XV. What follow up did you do in relationship to this topic?

**DUE
AUGUST 1st**