

Confirmation Sponsor Guide

A Sponsor’s Prayer

*God of all ages, You send out your spirit to touch the hearts of people so that they may believe in you and Jesus, whom You sent. Loving, gracious God, send your Holy Spirit upon me. Make me an instrument of your love. Make me more aware of the many ways of Your presence. Teach me to reverence what is holy in others, and to be patient with what I do not understand. Deepen my faith in the gospel, and help me pass it on by good example. With those who are hesitant or afraid, let me be a source of encouragement. And with those who are weak, let me be a pillar of strength. I humbly accept the ministry of sponsor and pray You will continue to guide and sustain me in this important role. Bless me on this journey. Open my ears to always listen; my mouth to always speak my feelings and reflections and my hands to always reach out to others. Help my heart to grow closer to you and all in Your family. Lord, send Your Holy Spirit and renew the face of the earth. I praise you through Christ our Lord. Amen*

**Congratulations!** You have been chosen. Someone thinks you are important to them. They see you as a follower of Christ. Being a Confirmation sponsor is not just a one-time thing…It is a significant, critical relationship in the life of a young person – for the rest of their life. A new journey begins as you share and grow in your own faith. Accepting the invitation to be a sponsor for your candidate is not only a commitment to help him or her grow in his or her relationship with God and the Church, but is also an opportunity to renew and deepen your own faith.

**Understanding Your Role**

Confirmation sponsors “bring the candidates to receive the sacrament, present them to the minister for anointing, and will later help them fulfill their baptismal promises faithfully under the influence of the Holy Spirit whom they have received.” (*Rite of Confirmation*, 5)

As you journey through Confirmation preparation, celebration and beyond, your role includes affirming the strengths of your candidate and pointing out ways he or she can grow and become better in the practice of faith. You may guide, teach and explain things they have found in their portfolio, from presenters and during small group sessions. Your candidate may look to you for examples of how to lead a faithful life.

You do not need to be perfect. Just walk with your candidate, share your own faith story and listen to his or her story. You don’t need to be an expert in psychology or the doctrines of the faith. Good sponsorship is based on your willingness to share your own experience of being Catholic and growing in your relationship with God. Let this invitation to be a sponsor inspire you to focus more on your faith, which will not only help you, but also be a great example to your candidate.

**What is Catholic Confirmation?**

Confirmation is a Sacrament in the Catholic Church in which the one who is confirmed (confirmandi) receives the gifts of the Holy Spirit through the imposition of hand and anointing with oils by the bishop. It’s considered a sacrament of initiation which means that it brings you deeper into communion with the Church. Confirmation is a sacrament of initiation which completes [**baptism**](http://www.aboutcatholics.com/beliefs/a-guide-to-catholic-baptism/) through sealing in Holy Spirit and anoints the recipient as priest, prophet, and king.

**Who can receive Confirmation?**

In the Catholic Church, anyone that has been [**baptized properly**](http://www.aboutcatholics.com/beliefs/a-guide-to-catholic-baptism/) can and should be confirmed.

**Who administers Confirmation?**

Bishops are the original ministers of Confirmation along with other Catholic sacraments (Lumen Gentium 26).

*“Bishops are the successors of the apostles. They have received the fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders. The administration of this sacrament by them demonstrates clearly that its effects is to unite those who receive it more closely to the Church, her apostolic origins, and her mission of bearing witness to Christ.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 1313)*

In the Eastern churches (non-Latin rites) the priest is the ordinary minister of this sacrament and performs it immediately after baptism. However, it is performed with chrism oil that has been consecrated by the bishop expressing the apostolic unity. In the Latin rite (which is the largest of all rites) the bishop is the ordinary minister.

In the west, most churches have the Bishop come and visit the local parish to confirm an entire class (age group) of students who spent the year preparing for confirmation. However, the Bishop can also ‘delegate’ his apostolic authority to perform the sacrament of confirmation to the local priest who is then able to administer the sacrament without the bishop having to be present.

**How many times can one be Confirmed?**

*“Like Baptism which it completes, Confirmation is given only once, for it too imprints on the soul an indelible spiritual mark, the ‘character,’ which is the sign that Jesus Christ has marked a Christian with the seal of his Spirit by clothing him with power from on high so that he may be his witness.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1304)*

In other words, just once! It’s a permanent thing that is fully completed and doesn’t expire.

**What is the matter and form of Confirmation?**

Catholic Confirmation is performed with the ordinary minister extending his hand over the one to be confirmed and anointing his/her head with the oil of chrism saying, “be sealed with the Holy Spirit.” The actual Confirmation ceremony is much longer than this, but this is the “meat” of the action. The oil of chrism is consecrated by the bishop at the Chrism Mass on Holy Thursday and is reserved for special things like [**Baptism**](http://www.aboutcatholics.com/beliefs/a-guide-to-catholic-baptism/), Confirmation, [**Holy Orders**](http://www.aboutcatholics.com/beliefs/holy-orders-a-special-priesthood/), blessing of tower bells, consecration of churches, altars, chalices and patens.

**What are the effects of Confirmation?**

In short it is the full outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost. Confirmation brings Catholics a deepening of baptismal grace and unites us more firmly to Christ. It increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit and [**leaves an indelible mark on the soul**](http://www.aboutcatholics.com/beliefs/a-guide-to-catholic-baptism/) just like baptism.



**What are the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit?**

The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit received through Confirmation are

1. Wisdom,
2. Understanding,
3. Knowledge,
4. Fortitude or Courage,
5. Counsel,
6. Piety or Love, and
7. Fear of the Lord.

**Where is this sacrament found in Scripture?**

Anointing with oil is an ancient Biblical tradition originating in the Old Testament with the Jewish people. The Jews had a messiah and it was usually their king at the time, however they were also awaiting a greater messiah, one that would deliver them and raise them up. This messiah happened to be Jesus. The sign of the Messiah was that he was royal and messiahs were put in their position by being anointed with oil and an appointment from God. This tradition carried on in Christianity with the teaching of the sharing in Christ’s messiahship and his royal priesthood. In fact, the first example of Catholic Confirmation can be found in Acts 8:14-17.



**Things to Think About and Do**

1. Give the gift of time and attention during the period of preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation. The best gifts your candidate can receive from you are the sharing of your own faith and affirming ad calling forth of theirs, which in turn will also be a gift to you. Faith sharing encompasses talking about beliefs, values and meanings that shape your life because you are a believer and a Christian.
2. Look for signs of goodness in your candidate…generosity, courage, faith, hope and love. Reflect back to the candidate.
3. Listen more than talk. Listen without expressing judgement. It is more important to connect than correct, welcome than to instruct, explore than to explain. Listen to the small stuff, listen between the lines and learn from your candidate.
4. Leave ‘space’ for your candidate to fully express thoughts, values and opinions without interruption. It is okay to leave ‘space’ for silence and not just fill time with chatter.
5. When you talk, talk from your heart.
6. Find small ways to show you are thinking of your candidate throughout the time of preparation with an e-mail, phone call or send a card in the mail.
7. Follow up on interests the candidate has mentioned to you and discuss them with the candidate.
8. Pray for the candidate daily and ask the candidate to pray for you. ‘Make room for the Holy Spirit.’
9. Tell stories that reflect your faith. These stories don’t have to be pious or overly holy. They can simply reflect the daily challenges and graces that like entails.
10. Offer concrete, positive praise for the goodness and potential you see in the candidate.
11. Realize your role doesn’t end on Confirmation day. Make plans to stay in touch. Celebrate life events together, remember the candidate’s Confirmation anniversary, attend Mass together, and remember things they told you that are important to them. Pass on interesting articles, inspirational writing or prayers. Continue to be an example of a faith-filled Catholic. Invite them to accompany you for service activities.

Loyola Press, *For Confirmation Sponsors and Candidates; Faith to Faith,* 2014

*Catholic Confirmation Explained*, About Catholics Team

Kelly, Maureen A. *Call to Celebrate Confirmation: Sponsor and Mentor Handbook.* Orlando, FL: Harcourt Religion, 2008.

St. Therese Church of Deephaven, *Confirmation Sponsor Guide, 2017*