

Sponsor Guide

This Sponsor Guide is written for the Confirmation Sponsor to read before they meet with their Candidate. These articles will give the Sponsor time to reflect on what it means to be a sponsor for a candidate for Confirmation. Let's start by reflecting on what the Sacrament of Confirmation is all about.

What is Confirmation?

One of the official definitions of Confirmation is given in the *Catechism*:

"Confirmation perfects Baptismal grace; it is the sacrament which gives the Holy Spirit in order to root us more deeply in the divine filiation... and help us bear witness to the Christian faith in words accompanied by deeds" (CCC 1316).

Let's break this down, so it's easier to understand:

a] "perfects Baptismal grace": when we are Baptized, we receive the gift of grace that frees and forgives us from sin. As human beings, we come into the world already fallen - we cannot "achieve" grace by our own merit. When we say Confirmation "perfects" Baptismal grace, we do not mean that Baptism is not fine on its own: Confirmation enhances an already given gift.

Analogy: Baptism would be like cake batter and Confirmation is like baking the cake. The ingredients are there before Confirmation, given in Baptism and can technically be used. However, Confirmation helps us become what we are truly created to be in a new way. The cake batter becomes a baked cake!

b] "gives the Holy Spirit": the third member of the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) is often overlooked. However, He is so important to a person's faith life. There were only approximately 30 years that Jesus was on earth; it has been 2000 years since then, and that is due to the Holy Spirit. When Jesus ascended into heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit to be present *within us*. In Confirmation, this is unleashed in a new way by the bishop. People find God deep within themselves through the presence of the Holy Spirit.

c] "root us more deeply in divine filiation": through Confirmation, our bond with God and the Church is deepened. Christ, although He was fully human, was also fully divine; by His power, we are also brought into this divine nature (once again, not from our own merit). Confirmation reminds us of our identity as God's children and the supernatural effects that come with it.

d] "help us bear witness to the Christian faith": Confirmation isn't a "spiritual graduation" – it is a call to do more outside of the classroom. Sometimes, it is hard to proclaim your faith in the world and do the right thing. If a candidate is open to this new power of the Holy Spirit, he or she is strengthened to live out their mission.

Where does it originate?

Confirmation comes from the very beginning of the early Church. After Jesus ascended into heaven, the disciples were afraid of what others would say or do. They hid in a locked room upstairs together. One day, the entire room shook, and the Apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit – a gift that also happens at Confirmation!

“When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.” – Acts 2:1-5

Suddenly, the Apostles found new strength. They were able to speak in tongues (different languages that they had never learned), they could heal people, and released so many gifts out into the world. It was in one room, where a small handful of people received the Holy Spirit, that originated a religion that currently has over a BILLION people.

What happens during the actual Confirmation Liturgy?

The bishop will extend his hands, either on the individual or over the entire group, and pray that they receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Each candidate is anointed with perfumed Chrism oil, which is a spiritual seal that marks the candidate with the joy of our faith. As you lay your hand over the candidate’s shoulder, the bishop anoints them and says,

“[Confirmation saint name], Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit. Peace be with you.”

The candidate replies, “And with your spirit.”

Why is Confirmation important? What are the effects of it?

The Chrism represents an “indelible mark” – a permanent seal or sign that we serve the Lord. For example, in many armies, a soldier is marked with their leader’s seal to show their undying loyalty. Although the Chrism washes off, the seal is within us forever that we are Christians who follow Christ’s mission. We are protected by this seal, both in life and after death.

In this, we are united more firmly to God. The extra strength that we receive from the Holy Spirit in Confirmation, and the gifts that come with it, can impact the candidate and those around them.

If you would like more information on the sacrament, consult the Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1285-1321.

What is the role of a Confirmation Sponsor?

The role of a sponsor is both of preparation and follow-up:

a) to prepare the candidate for Confirmation. To receive the sacrament, a student must be in a state of grace and must be ready to receive the gifts. Your role is to answer questions they may have about Church teaching or receiving the sacrament, encourage them to pray frequently, and be a model of faith for them. You do NOT have to be a perfect model of faith, but a real and relatable one. You are a trusted mentor for the candidate, which paves the way to helping them be inspired by your example.

b) to help the candidate live out their faith after Confirmation. As we discussed, Confirmation is an invitation to engage with faith more, even if the classroom learning ends. You can do this by praying for and with them, reaching out to them frequently, introducing them to new prayers – we hope to prepare you to do all these things with your candidate!

What is your role as a sponsor of a Holy Spirit Catholic Community Candidate?

Your candidate will contact you about having four conversations together. These chats can be done in person or virtually. Each conversation will take between a half hour and an hour. The number of times you meet is up to the two of you to decide. Begin and end each chat with a prayer.

The questions for the chats are found on the Holy Spirit Catholic Community Website: <https://www.hsccl.us/religious-8th>.

Your candidate will have an interview to do with you for the first chat. This is a great way to get you talking about the Catholic faith. Each chat will have information to read, questions for the candidate to answer and great conversations to share.

- Chat 1 – Sponsor Interview
- Chat 2 – Gifts of the Holy Spirit
- Chat 3 – Sacraments and Receiving Reconciliation
- Chat 4 – Beatitudes and Catholic Social Teachings

These sponsor chats to be completed by April 11.