

Confirmation Handbook



Saint Clement Parish
Striving for *deeper* holiness, *greater* communion, and *wider* service

642 W. Deming Place Chicago, IL 60614 ♦ 773-281-0371 ♦ www.clement.org

Confirmation Handbook 2017-2018

Introduction

Dear Confirmation Candidates & Families,

Welcome to Confirmation Preparation!

During my first year here at Saint Clement, (2015-2016), I spent a considerable amount of time meeting with families, talking to past and current Confirmation students, learning about new resources, and charting a new course for our Confirmation preparation program here at Saint Clement. Beginning in 2016-2017, Confirmation preparation has migrated to a two-year process beginning in 7th Grade. For those who have had a child go through Confirmation Preparation in the past, some aspects will be similar; but there will also be new pieces as well! Each program component has been specifically chosen to help our students to prepare their hearts to receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation, and to foster spiritual practices which will sustain the divine spark within them for years to come! It is our hope that each and every young person in our program will, as a result of participating in this process, be filled with the Holy Spirit and *set aflame by the love of Christ!*

This handbook will explain all the necessary requirements and details of your Confirmation preparation. If, after reading this material thoroughly, you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at 773-281-0371.

Candidates, as you go through this preparation process, know that you are not alone. Your family, your sponsor, your catechists and teachers, and the wider community of Saint Clement are here to assist you and are praying for you! Parents and Sponsors, know that we are here to assist you also as you support your child/candidate through the Confirmation preparation process. We'll be sending home materials and resources throughout the process to assist you in supporting your candidate along their journey toward Confirmation.

Come Holy Spirit!

In Christ,

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Reflection

*"I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing!"
~ Jesus, Luke 12:49*

*"When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, the disciples 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 2:1-4*

"On the day of Pentecost, the apostles received the Holy Spirit as the Lord had promised. They also received the power of giving the Holy Spirit to others and so completing the work of baptism. This we read in the Acts of the Apostles. When Saint Paul placed his hands on those who had been baptized, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they began to speak other languages and in prophetic words..."

In our day the coming of the Holy Spirit in confirmation is no longer marked by the gift of tongues, but we know his coming by faith. He fills our hearts with the love of God, brings us together in one faith but in different vocations, and works within us to make the Church one and holy.

*The gift of the Holy Spirit which you are to receive will be a spiritual sign and seal to make you more like Christ and more perfect members of his Church. At his baptism by John, Christ himself was anointed by the Spirit and sent out on his public ministry to set the world on fire."
~ Homily, Rite of Confirmation*

*"Come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of Your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love..."
~ Prayer to the Holy Spirit*

Confirmation Preparation—A Two Year Process

Beginning in 2016-2017, Saint Clement Parish moved to a two-year Confirmation Preparation process, in keeping with Archdiocese of Chicago Policy for Adolescent Confirmation Preparation.

Since this was a new requirement, students who were in 8th Grade (either in Religious Education or in Saint Clement School) in the Fall of 2016 celebrated their Confirmation in Spring of 2017 (8th Grade Year). (We grandfathered them in so as to enable them to celebrate Confirmation on schedule).

Last year's 7th graders also began their Confirmation Preparation process and will be confirmed in the Spring of 2018 (Spring of their 8th Grade Year).

Beginning in the Fall of 2017, all students normally will be required to complete two years of Confirmation Preparation prior to reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Curriculum

Looking at what we have used for our curriculum in the past, there were a number of challenges that came up:

- 1) The materials were not engaging for our media-savvy youth.
- 2) We did not have an easy way of providing a "make up session" for students who missed a class. This meant that students who missed a session (particularly those in Religious Education), missed out on the topic addressed that week.
- 3) Students who were coming to us for Confirmation Prep—even those who had been enrolled for years in our Religious Education Program or Parish School—often did not have a deeper sense of the basic message of Christianity: God's invitation to be in relationship with Him, and did not experience this in a deeply personal manner.

We're happy to report that we've found a really great solution to each of these!

Alpha Youth Film Series

What is Alpha?

Alpha is a series of interactive sessions exploring the basics of the Christian faith. The Youth Film Series is 12 episodes designed to engage young people in conversations about faith, life, and God. Each session includes a meal (or snack), a talk and small group discussion, where no question is too small and no answer is pre-packaged.

View the Alpha Youth Film Series Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CNnagAo1ns4>

Alpha Youth Film Series—Meeting the Challenges.

1. **Alpha is engaging for our media-savvy youth.** We used the Alpha Youth Film Series materials in Confirmation Prep process in 2016-2017. We asked our students what their faith was like before & after Alpha. Here's what they said:
 - *"Before Alpha, I was just going to church and praying without a purpose, but now I pray thinking about Jesus and God and how they love me. Now when I pray and go to church I feel the love that God gives me." - Benny, 2017*
 - *Before Alpha—"My faith was ok, I believed in God but had a lot of doubts and didn't have a relationship with God.." - After Alpha — "I have a relationship with God and see things more clearly. I pray regularly and know my doubts are ok..." -Mary Jane, 2017*
 - *Before Alpha—"I was unsure of God and if he was real. I tried to believe when it was extremely hard." After Alpha—"I now have a stronger faith in God and it isn't as hard to believe."*
2. **Alpha makes it easy to provide a "make up session" for students who miss a session.** Because these videos are available online, they are readily available for students who miss a session. They can easily be watched at home so that students don't miss out on content even when they can't be present in class.
3. **Alpha helps young people hear, experience, and respond to God's invitation to a relationship with Him.** Here's what one of our teens had to say:
 - *"After watching the Alpha videos, I felt closer to God because I started to realize the importance that he plays in my everyday life."*

Our Confirmation students will use Alpha in the Fall of 7th Grade.

Testimonials About Alpha:

"Alpha really does help people to come to a personal encounter with Jesus. Many Catholics have been Catholic all of their lives and they have a relationship with Jesus but they are not really conscious of it and not intentional about it. Alpha helps them to discover the intense relationship that Jesus wants to have with them." ~ Bishop Michael Byrnes, Archdiocese of Detroit, USA

"I love to use Alpha with my young people because it takes them on a journey into the heart of God and it lays down foundations that they can build the rest of their lives upon. The easy-going, 'come and see' approach is perfect for teenagers, often provoking them to make a decision to follow Jesus, while launching them into a relationship with him that is real and honest." ~ Will Desmond, Sion Community UK

"In my parish Alpha has impacted some of the young people in amazing ways. Jesus has made a difference in their lives. With Alpha, we see young people interested in being leaders in the Church,... It's sometimes hard to even get them to go home after Alpha!" ~ Andrew Boodoo, St. Anthony Parish, Trinidad

Chosen: Your Journey Toward Confirmation (Ascension Press)

Our Confirmation Students in 8th Grade will use the *Chosen: Your Journey Toward Confirmation Series* (from Ascension Press) as the main curriculum for the remainder of their Confirmation journey.

Chosen: Your Journey Toward Confirmation is a twenty-four lesson program that provides everything needed to prepare students both intellectually and spiritually to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation and to become lifelong disciples of Christ.

Chosen's carefully designed methodology features highly effective and engaging material conveyed through videos, student workbooks, and classroom experience. Guides for leaders, parents, and sponsors — as well as additional online resources—make *Chosen* unlike any program available in the Church today.

Like Alpha, *Chosen rises to the challenge and provides engaging, media rich content (also available online for easy session make up!) and which invites students to deepen their relationship with Christ and the Holy Spirit.*

View the *Chosen* Trailer: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tl_SkFlsZAY

Chosen Parent & Sponsor Resources

In addition to providing top notch materials for students and catechists, *Chosen* also has excellent parent and sponsor guides which will assist you in having ongoing, meaningful conversations with your teen throughout their Confirmation preparation journey:

Chosen Parent Guide—will be sent home in the Fall of 2017 to 8th Grade Families

Chosen Sponsor Guide—will be sent home in the Fall of 2017 to 8th Grade Families

The Role of the Parents and Family

As the first and primary educators of their children, parents have the greatest influence on their children. It is from the parents that the faith was first shared. Through their example, parents are an ongoing resource for their children about what it means to live as adult Catholic Christians in our world. Their enthusiasm about the Confirmation Program and attentiveness to the format can greatly encourage the candidates. Therefore, parents must play an integral part in the Confirmation process, which signals their

children's full initiation into the Church.

Families should become a part of the process in these ways:

1. Express clearly their support for the candidate in whatever ways are comfortable to the family.
2. Making attendance for all of the Confirmation activities and weekly Mass a priority on the family schedule.
3. Praying for the candidate regularly as a family. A Confirmation prayer can be found on the back cover of this booklet.
4. Participating in discussion at home to facilitate sharing with your child.
5. Attending the Confirmation liturgy as a family.

The Role of the Candidate

Participation in Weekly Mass:

Joining the larger community of Saint Clement Church at weekly Mass is an essential part of preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation as it is an essential part of living life as an adult Catholic. Participation in liturgical ministries (serving as readers, greeters, ushers, and altar servers) is encouraged. The presence of youth at Sunday liturgy helps to make our worship vibrant and whole. The community responds by walking with you on your journey of faith and praying for you during this time of preparation. **Each candidate will complete 6 Mass Journals each year of the process (6 Mass Journal in 7th Grade, and 6 Mass Journals in 8th Grade).**

Confirmation Session Attendance:

The Confirmation Program of which you are part is designed as an intense and meaningful period of investigation of faith and values. We meet during class time plus two retreats. Therefore, it is expected of each participant that they be on time and attend all sessions. We have prepared a calendar so that you can adjust family, work and school activity schedules accordingly.

A great part of the Confirmation preparation process is helping to build a felt sense of Christian Community and this requires personal **presence**. Once missed, it is impossible to "make up" a session. There are however, legitimate reasons for missing a session: illness, family crisis, or special circumstance. In the rare case of a missed session, it is the responsibility for the candidate to contact a member of the Confirmation team as soon as possible to get access to missed material online. Students will be required to view missed content online and then submit a worksheet (which can be requested from Rachel Espinoza, Program Director) answering questions to demonstrate completion of the

at-home makeup.

Attendance and participation will be helpful considerations when discerning readiness for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Service:

"Anyone among you who aspires to greatness must serve the rest, and whoever wants to rank first among you must serve the needs of all." Mt. 20:26-27

Jesus Himself modeled service for us. As members of the Body of Christ, and in His name, the candidates for the Sacrament of Confirmation will be called to the service of family, Church and world for the sake of the Gospel. The Matthew 25 Service Project, based on the Works of Mercy found in the 25th chapter of Matthew's Gospel, is designed to help integrate direct service into your everyday experience of living the Catholic life. (See Matthew 25 Service Project packet.)

The Matthew 25 Service Project is to be completed during the Summer between 7th & 8th Grade.

The Retreats:

It is required that all participants of the program take part in two parish sponsored Confirmation Retreats. The retreats are seen as vital elements to the program as a whole.

7th Graders (2017-2018) will attend the Holy Fire Retreat on either October 20th or 21st at UIC Pavilion, and the Alpha Retreat Day in December 2017.

8th Graders (2017-2018) will attend the Holy Fire Retreat on either October 20th or 21st at UIC Pavilion, and the Confirmation Retreat in January of 2018.

In 2018, Saint Clement Parish will be hosting our Confirmation Retreat along with Immaculate Conception / St. Joseph Parish, St. Teresa of Avila Parish, and St. Michael Parish on January 21st, 2018. The time and location are **TBD**.

Students who are unable to participate in this retreat will be required to attend an alternate retreat offered at another local parish.

Sponsor Activity Booklet: (8th Graders)

The sponsor will also receive a copy of the *Chosen Sponsor's Guide* along with a calendar with suggested activities to complete with their candidate. This guide will be available in the Fall.

Interview: (8th Graders ONLY)

Each candidate will have an interview with a staff member of Saint Clement Church prior to the Sacrament of Confirmation. This interview is an opportunity for the candidate to bring forward any questions, concerns or issues regarding faith, Catholicism, morals, etc. It is also a means by which the staff can help determine the readiness of each candidate for the sacrament of Confirmation.

Letter to the Bishop: (8th Graders ONLY)

Each candidate is required to write a letter to the confirming bishop. Each letter should include:

1. Brief introduction of the candidate
2. Expression of the desire to be Confirmed
3. Explanation of service projects their outcome and their effect on your faith
4. Some words about the candidate's personal faith growth; past, present, future
5. Explanation of how the candidate will live out the commitment made through Confirmation.

All letters should be placed in an envelope with the candidate's name in the upper left-hand corner. Your teacher or catechist will assist you in the writing process and will keep record of submitted letters and forward all to the Bishop.

The Role of the Sponsor

Sponsors are companions on the journey of faith and will have a real function of spiritual direction to perform for their candidates. Sponsors should **not** be chosen as a way to honor relatives or flatter friends. **Sponsors should be chosen by the end of September in the Fall of 8th Grade year.**

The following are characteristics to look for in a sponsor:

- ◆ Must be at least 16 years old;
- ◆ Must be chosen by the one to be Confirmed;
- ◆ Must be someone other than the candidate's mother or father;
- ◆ Be a practicing Catholic who has received the Eucharist, has been Confirmed, and leads a life in harmony with the faith;
- ◆ Be able to relate in friendship with the candidate;
- ◆ Be a good listener, one with whom the candidate can confide about his/her personal and spiritual life;
- ◆ Be willing and able to share her/his own experience of faith;
- ◆ Be willing to pray for the candidate;
- ◆ Be willing and able to make a time commitment to the Confirmation process;

- ◆ Preferably be from the parish or from the immediate area so as to be available as a real "companion on the journey."

If the sponsor from Baptism meets this description, it would be desirable, but not necessary, to ask him/her to be the Confirmation Sponsor.

Confirmation F.A.Q.'s

1. May a candidate have more than one sponsor?

Yes, however, only one should be designated as the liturgical sponsor who will present the candidate for Confirmation.

2. May parents be sponsors?

No, parents may not act as sponsors (CF. Canon Law # 874) but they may present their son or daughter to the Archbishop for Confirmation.

3. Why are Confirmation sponsors chosen?

Sponsors present the person to be confirmed to the bishop for the anointing. They speak in the name of the whole believing community. The sponsors later help the confirmed person witness to Christ in their daily lives.

4. May someone from a long distance away be a sponsor and someone else fill in as proxy?

Yes, however, it is recommended that someone nearby be chosen as a sponsor so that s/he can be more intimately involved in the candidate's preparation.

5. May a priest be a sponsor?

Yes.

6. May a Religious priest, sister or brother be a sponsor?

Yes, but s/he needs permission from the local leader of their community.

7. How do I choose a Confirmation Name?

During the sacrament, your sponsor will tell the Bishop your Confirmation name. It is a tradition in the church to choose a Confirmation name in memory of a particular Saint. You can also choose your Baptismal name for your Confirmation name. Take some time to study the origin of your Saint name or Baptismal name, as it is important to know that God calls us all by name.

8. If a candidate is unable to be confirmed at his/her parish on the date that is scheduled, may s/he be confirmed at another parish?

Yes, this should be worked out between the pastors of both parishes.

9. What is meant by "the sacraments of initiation?"

Through the sacraments of initiation, people become members of the Church and

are welcomed into the community of believers in order to live as true followers of Jesus.

10. Which sacraments are called sacraments of initiation?

Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist are the sacraments of initiation.

11. Why are Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist called the sacraments of initiation?

- Through Baptism we become God's own sons and daughters. Through water and the Holy Spirit, we become new creations and are welcomed into the Church as new members of the Body of Christ.
- Through Confirmation we are more closely bound to the Church. We are helped through the Holy Spirit to bear witness to Christ by both our words and deeds.
- Through the Eucharist we are more fully received into the Body of Christ by partaking of the Bread of Life. When together we share in the Eucharist, we show forth the unity of God's people.

12. What promise did Jesus make to His Apostles before He ascended to the Father?

Before He ascended to the Father, Jesus made this promise: "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, the Spirit of Truth, to stay with you forever." (Jn. 14:16)

13. When was that promise fulfilled?

That promise was fulfilled at Pentecost. "When the day of Pentecost arrived, all the believers were gathered together in one place. Suddenly there was a noise from the sky which sounded like a strong wind blowing, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then they saw what looked like tongues of fire spreading out; and each person there was touched. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:1-4)

14. Is the Holy Spirit given to the followers of Jesus today?

Yes, through Baptism, God gives us a new birth by the Holy Spirit. Through Confirmation our initiation is complete as we offer our own "yes" to God's call and we receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

15. Who may receive the Sacrament of Confirmation?

Confirmation may be conferred upon any baptized person. However, in the Western Church, it is most often conferred when the person wants to enter more fully into the Church, has been properly instructed, and is willing to make a commitment to

take an active part in the life of the Church.

16. Who usually confirms?

The bishop is the usual minister of Confirmation. The bishop confirms to show that Confirmation is closely related to the first outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles. As members of his flock, we are reminded of the first Pentecost and called to be a witness of Christ among all peoples. Under certain circumstances the bishop may grant faculties to the pastor of a parish to minister the Sacrament of Confirmation.

17. How is the Sacrament of Confirmation conferred?

The Sacrament of Confirmation is conferred through the anointing with chrism of the forehead and through the words, "Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit."

18. Which are the gifts of the Holy Spirit?

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are the gifts of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of right judgment and courage, knowledge and reverence, and wonder and awe in God's presence.

19. What is the ideal way in which the sacrament of Confirmation is celebrated?

The ideal way in which the sacrament of Confirmation is celebrated is within the Eucharist. In that way, we can see the important connection between Confirmation and the Eucharist, which are both sacraments of initiation. At the Confirmation Mass, we hear the Word of God and receive the Bread of Life. We are also sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.

20. Does Confirmation mark the end of religious education?

No, Confirmation is not the end of religious education or faith formation. Confirmation, the last stage of initiation, marks the *beginning* of a new awareness of life in Christ. It is a call to live as full members of the Body of Christ. Confirmation is one step along the road of lifelong growth in faith. All 8th Grade students and High School students are invited to participate in Saint Clement Parish's Youth Group, the God Squad. Information about God Squad is found below.

21. What does Confirmation call us to be?

Confirmation calls us to be committed Christians. By that we mean we are to live the message of Jesus in everyday life. The sacrament calls us to continue to pray, serve others, and celebrate with the people of God, gathered together as His Church.

God Squad Youth Ministry

Saint Clement Parish's youth group, the God Squad, is open to current 8th graders and High School students who are eager to learn more about Christ and wish to serve others. God Squad aims to help the youth in the community find a place in the church and become closer to faith and God together. Confirmation Candidates are strongly encouraged to get involved. Contact Lisa Friedlander at lfriedlander@clement.org for more information or to sign up!

God Squad Meeting Dates 2017-2018—TBD

It should be understood that this is your Confirmation Program. It has been designed to assist you on your journey toward a deeper relationship with Christ and with the Holy Spirit as you prepare for the Sacrament of Confirmation. In order for this to be accomplished, both leaders and participants must take their role seriously. Finally, because it is our sincere wish to meet the needs of our spirit, we invite and encourage discussion, questions, challenge and suggestions. Please voice any such concerns, knowing that they will be accepted and respected. Know that we are praying for you.

Prayer for Our Youth (Prayer for Parents & Sponsors)

We greatly appreciate you partnering with us to pray for the deeper conversion and holiness of our youth as they prepare for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

There are many different ways that you can pray for them. Some prayer ideas include, but are not limited to:

- 1) Pray a daily *Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be* when brushing your teeth.
- 2) Offer spontaneous prayers for them on your way to work.
- 3) Offer weekly Mass, Holy Hour, Rosary, or Divine Mercy chaplet.
- 4) Tape this prayer to your bathroom mirror to pray daily.

A Prayer for Our Youth

Loving God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
You are the giver of all we possess,
the source of all blessings.
We thank You and praise you.

Thank you for the gift of (insert name here).

May s/he come to intimately know You, heavenly Father,
and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.

I pray that (insert name here) will worship You
as an active member of the Body of Christ.

May Your Holy Spirit help (insert name here)
to grow in faith, hope, and love,
so s/he may know peace, truth, and goodness.

Drive away Satan and all his empty promises.

May (insert name here)'s ears hear Your voice.
May his/her eyes see Your beautiful presence in all things.
May his/her lips proclaim Your word.
May his/her heart be Your dwelling place.
May his/her hands do works of charity.
May his/her feet walk in the way of Jesus Christ, Your Son and our Lord. Amen.

Prayer for Confirmation Students

Breathe into me Holy Spirit, That all my thoughts may be holy.
Move in me, Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy.
Attract my heart, Holy Spirit, that I may love only what is holy.
Strengthen me, Holy Spirit, that I may defend all that is holy.
Protect me, Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy.