

Learning Centers for Confirmation

Twentieth Third
Publications
Sample

LEARNING
CENTERS *for*
Confirmation



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Introduction

In the restored Rite of Christian Initiation, the sacrament of confirmation is celebrated with baptism and Eucharist. In this rite, confirmation is a sacrament of initiation into the Christian community. Confirmation outside of this context is more difficult to teach and explain and more difficult for recipients to fully understand.

In many parishes today, however, confirmation is celebrated in high school. Many catechists see this as an opportunity to teach the candidates every church doctrine as if they will never again study about their faith. Or, a program may consist of hours of service projects, as if the candidates had not been actively living the gospel up to this time. The *confirmandi* are told they will receive the Holy Spirit, as if what took place with the coming of the Spirit at their baptism was insignificant.

So then, is confirmation about doctrine? Is it about service, about adult commitment? Or is it about initiation—a beginning—or about completion—an ending—not unlike graduation?

In a way it is all these things, and so these learning centers provide an opportunity for teenagers to acknowledge the Holy Spirit already active in their lives and invite them to better understand the sacraments that initiate them into the Christian community. They focus on baptism, the Eucharist, the Mass, the Holy Spirit, the works of mercy, Catholic social teaching, and much more.

Learning centers are one means for helping parents and other adults get involved in the religious formation of children in non-intimidating and practical ways. Many parents are eager to learn more about their own faith and want to hand that faith on to their children, but they don't feel they have adequate training or enough information to do so. Yet parents share their faith best through example, family rituals, and conversations. Learning centers can help them extend this process. This practical method of faith sharing can be used with almost any doctrinal content when presented in an age-appropriate manner with sensitivity to various learning styles.

Here parents are provided the opportunity to complete hands-on tasks, have discussions/conversations about their faith with their children, and reinforce material that is addressed in their children's textbooks.

Learning centers offer creative and interactive ways to do this. Plus they are flexible. Parents can choose a convenient time to visit the center with their children and work at their own pace. It usually takes about two hours to thoughtfully visit the sessions and complete the activities. Learning centers also give the director of faith formation an opportunity to observe parents, children, and other adults working together. This can help him or her determine which learning centers are most beneficial in the learning process.

Special thanks to Carol Mercord, Religious Education Director at St. Joseph Parish, Prescott, Wisconsin, for her continued encouragement and suggestions. Also to Tessa Schuermann, Youth Minister at St. Bridget's Parish in River Falls, Wisconsin, for sharing her ideas and expertise.

Letter to Parents

Dear Parents,

Thank you so much for your participation in these confirmation learning centers. We hope this will be a good opportunity for you and your son or daughter to talk, to share, to pray, and to grow in faith together. We hope it will also be a good opportunity for you to renew your own commitment to your Catholic faith. Please take time to consider the following questions—either before you visit the centers or afterward when you have more time for reflection.

- How do you feel about your own faith at this point in your life? Are you struggling? Growing? Strong? Weak? Is how you live your faith even an issue for you at this time?
- Can you remember when you were the age of your child? What similarities or differences are there between then and now in terms of the faith/religion/church situation? Were there things happening in your life at that time that your child does not have to deal with now? Vice versa?
- How do you think you are handing on your Catholic faith to your child? How do you measure your success or failure?
- Can you think of any recent situations when you talked to your child one on one about his or her faith and relationship with God? What happened?
- How are you personally involved in regular weekend worship? Does your child regularly attend Mass? What happens when he or she objects to attending?
- Does your son or daughter attend religion classes but not Mass? Why has this happened?
- What help do you expect from your parish with the continuing development of your child's faith? What are your expectations for his or her confirmation preparation?

May God bless you for all you have done as a parent. You have graciously and faithfully brought your son or daughter to the table of the Lord, and now you are walking with him or her as he or she prepares to celebrate confirmation, an important step in their lifelong journey of faith.

Group Gathering Prayers

Parents, sponsors, and candidates may gather with a parish leader for prayer before and after participating in these centers with a parish leader. There is an Opening Gathering Prayer and a Closing Gathering Prayer.

OPENING GATHERING PRAYER

All In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
We come before you, Spirit of God.
Come to us, remain with us, and enlighten our hearts.
Give us light and strength to know your will,
to make it our own, and to live it in our lives.
Guide us by your wisdom, support us by your power,
for you are God, sharing the glory of Father and Son.
You desire justice for all.
Enable us to uphold the rights of others.
Unite us to yourself and keep us faithful to all that is true.
As we gather in your name, we pray that all our decisions
may be pleasing to you
and that we may be good and faithful servants.
You live and reign with the Father and the Son,
one God, forever and ever.

Candidate(s) Amen.

Parent/Sponsor Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.

Candidate(s) And kindle in them the fire of your love.

Parent/Sponsor Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.

All And you will renew the face of the earth.

Parent/Sponsor Let us pray.

Lord by the light of the Holy Spirit you have taught the hearts of your faithful.
In the same Spirit, help us to relish what is right and always rejoice in your love.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

CLOSING GATHERING PRAYER

All “We Are Called” (song)

Parent/Sponsor Acts of the Apostles 8:14–22, 25

Candidate(s) With the support of our families, our sponsors, and this parish, we choose to commit ourselves completely to preparing for the sacrament of confirmation. We understand that by committing ourselves to this process, we will try to learn more about our faith, to serve others willingly, to reflect on and deepen our relationship with God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, and to become witnesses of the gospel.

All “Here I Am, Lord” (song)

Parent/Sponsor *(lay hands on the shoulders of the candidates and pray silently for a few moments)*

All The Apostles’ Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

Now offer one another a sign of peace.

Learning Centers for Confirmation

At each center prepare the following:

- *A plastic page holder or laminated copy of the guidelines for the center. You will find the information for these at the beginning of each section: title, church teaching, goal, Bible verse, what you will learn, directions, and background*
- *Worksheets as needed for each participant*
- *A Bible (with a marker at the appropriate passage)*
- *Supplies as indicated for completing each project*

Note: *The letter for the parents with the list of learning centers should be available at the registration table for each participant.*

Your Christian Life Begins

Goal

To understand that the Christian life begins with the sacraments of initiation: baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist

Church Teaching

Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 1212

The sacraments of initiation—baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist—lay the *foundations* of every Christian life....By means of these sacraments of Christian initiation, [the faithful] thus receive in increasing measure the divine life and advance toward the perfection of charity.

Bible Verse

Romans 6:3–5

What You Will Learn

That sacraments are the foundation of the Catholic-Christian life
The history of initiation and the RCIA process
Sacraments are a “beginning,” not an end on your journey of faith

Supplies

Bible
Direction sheet
Worksheet “Stages of Faith”
Prayer activity
Dish of water

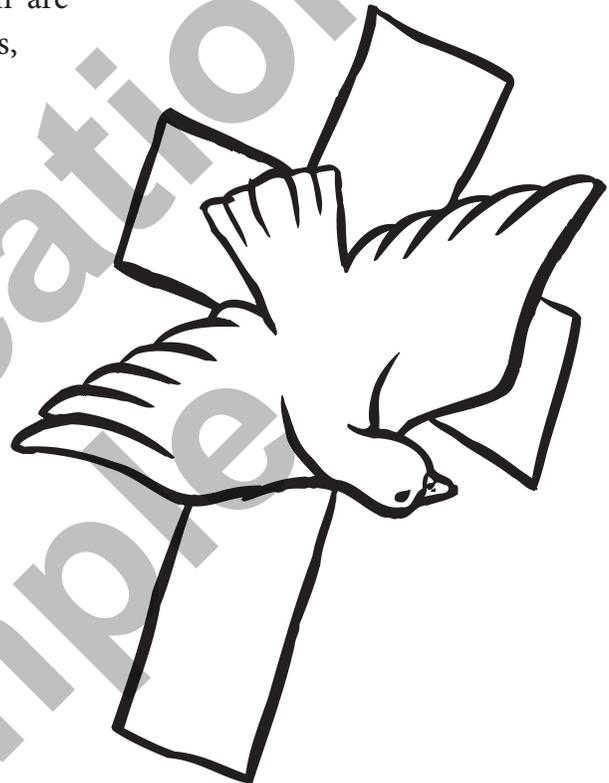
Directions for the Center

- Read Romans 6:3–5.
- Read the information and directions provided at the center.
- Talk about your own baptism, confirmation, and first Eucharist with your son or daughter—especially if you celebrated these when you were older.
- Ask your son or daughter what he/she recalls being told about his/her baptism or First Communion. What do you remember about these celebrations?
- Follow the directions for the worksheet “Stages of Faith.”
- Share the short prayer activity.

Background

In contemporary parish practice, children are usually baptized when they are infants, receive their First Communion at about age seven, and are generally confirmed as teenagers.

In the early Christian Church people received all three of these sacraments as adults after going through a process of preparation. This process, known today as RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults), was restored to full use after Vatican Council II (1963–1965). Today, adults who want to be initiated into the Catholic Church spend about a year preparing. This preparation period culminates at the Easter Vigil in the celebration of the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist.



Stages of Faith

People grow in their faith just as they grow in other aspects of their lives. This growth in faith generally occurs in stages (simplified here into four stages for your discussion). *Read about these stages and then follow the directions.*

STAGE ONE: IMITATING

(pre-school and primary grades)

At this stage children learn from those around them, primarily parents and extended family or adult caregivers. They learn to imitate prayer, attendance at Mass, doing good deeds, etc.

STAGE TWO: AFFILIATING

(middle and junior high school)

Children at this stage want to be involved in church, school, home, and community activities. They want to join teams and clubs. They want to be part of church activities. At home they like to participate in meal prayer, rituals, and family religious traditions.

STAGE THREE: SEARCHING

(high school and college)

It is very important at this stage to ask questions about the faith, the church, and about God. Parents and other adults need to be present as guides on this search, encouraging healthy questions even concerning other religions.

STAGE FOUR: OWNING

(young adulthood and beyond)

This is the time when adults recognize that they do not have all the answers and that there will be ups and downs in one's faith journey. However, they choose the Catholic Church as home for themselves. The prayers and rituals, especially the sacraments, continue to lead them to holiness as they cooperate with the grace (life in the Spirit) that God offers. They understand that learning about their faith is a lifetime commitment.

CANDIDATES: Discuss/share your experiences of stages one and two.

PARENTS: Discuss/share your experiences of stages three and four.

TOGETHER: Discuss/share where you are right now (especially the candidates)

Parent *(with the holy water, make the Sign of the Cross on your child's forehead while saying this prayer)*

Dear God, help us to grow in faith each day and open our hearts to your Spirit.

Child We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.