

**Saint Joseph Church
Mendham, New Jersey**



CONFIRMATION
Program Handbook
2016 - 2017

Confirmation Handbook

The goal of the Confirmation Preparation Program is to nurture, enhance, and deepen the spirituality of our youth so they can make a lifelong commitment to Christian discipleship.

Admission Requirements

1. Be a registered Parishioner at St. Joseph's Church: The candidate's family must be registered parishioners of the parish in order to enter the program.
2. Be of High School Age. Candidates must be entering ninth grade or above when
3. Have completed the Proper Formal Catechetical Instruction: Each candidate must have completed a minimum of grades 6-7-8 in a parish catechetical program or a parochial school. Teens who have not completed that instruction and wish to enter the program will be considered on an individual basis.

About Our Program

St. Joseph's Confirmation program is designed for the youth of our parish who have completed their faith formation studies either through a religious education program or a Catholic school program. Catholic high school students participate in our Confirmation program only in 10th grade.

Confirmation classes are held on certain Sundays from 5:00 pm to 6:30 pm from September to May. A calendar of dates will be distributed to all candidates and posted on the parish website. There is a monthly Teen Mass scheduled during the 12:00 noon Mass. Each month a different class will be asked to participate as Lectors and Gift Bearers. We also encourage our teens to volunteer to be a part of Music Ministry during the Teen Mass. In addition to the scheduled Confirmation classes, there will be a Confirmation Retreat and a Sponsor/Candidate event.

There will be two preliminary Rites celebrated as symbolic steps towards the Sacrament of Confirmation: the Rites of Enrollment and Covenant. Parents and sponsors are encouraged to attend these Rites which will take place during a 12pm weekend Mass. The Sacrament of Confirmation will be celebrated by the Bishop in May of 10th grade.

We make use of the video/discussion-based program "Decision Point" by the Dynamic Catholic Institute. "The goals of this program are: to prepare young Catholics for Confirmation by presenting the genius of Catholicism in a compelling way; to demonstrate the relevance of Catholicism in every aspect of their lives; to help them develop a personal relationship with Jesus, to give young Catholics and appetite for learning more about Catholicism; to engage them in a dynamic conversation about our faith; and to convince them that no matter what happens, they should always give God and the Church a central place in their lives."

Monthly Reflection Journal

Candidates are expected to submit a monthly journal reflection on the Gospel reading and Homily for that day. That day's class will begin with a discussion about the readings and the journal reflections. The next journal assignment will be distributed at class and can be found on the parish website.

Letter to the Pastor

Year II Candidates (10th graders) are asked to prepare a personal typewritten letter to Father Joe requesting to be confirmed. The letter is due July 1st before they enter 10th grade. Specific instructions will be distributed.

Attendance

Candidates are asked to be conscientious about their attendance and to be present for all scheduled sessions. Sports events/practices, trips, weekends away and homework are not acceptable reasons for being absent. If a candidate is going to be absent, it is the parent's responsibility to contact the office. Any candidate who misses more than three required events within the program year may be asked to have a meeting with the Confirmation Coordinator to determine the appropriate course of action. Excessive absences may lead to the postponement of receiving Confirmation by one year.

The diocese requires that all parish catechetical programs (grades 1-10) meet regularly during the year for a minimum of 25 hours. Our program schedule reflects that norm.

Cancellation

If class needs to be cancelled due to weather, we will email all parents and post on the parish website.

The Role of the Parents

Parents are the first and foremost catechists of their children and have the greatest capacity for influencing their faith development and religious formation. Parents' essential role is to encourage, support, and affirm your teen's involvement in the confirmation process. The goal of the parish staff and catechists is to support parents in this vital work.

As your teen progresses through the program, there are specific opportunities for you to assume this responsibility. Become familiar with the material being presented and discuss with your teen what he or she has learned. We will encourage you to go online and view the video clips that will be presented in class for yourself. Also, it is just as important that you are a witness to your own faith through your words and actions; praying with your family attending Mass weekly are ways to be witnesses to your faith. Additionally supporting your teen and our program by attending meetings, reading the materials provided, guiding your teen's choice of a name and a faith-filled sponsor, supporting your son or daughter in planning and performing Christian service, providing transportation to and from church related meetings and functions and volunteering to help are examples of ways you can be involved in their preparation process. Pray for your teen as well as others participating in this process.

The Role of the Candidates

During this period of invitation, formation & reflection, the candidate will be given the opportunity to really begin to understand his or her faith. They will come to know what it is like to be a part of a Christian community as an adult. They will learn to use the tools of their faith and the catholic tradition to help them in difficult situations. They are to have a personal desire to receive Confirmation, a willingness to more fully witness to Christ by word and action, and a "yes" to the responsibility to be an active member of the Church, spreading and defending the faith according to one's ability. Regular attendance and full participation is required.

Confirmation Names

To reinforce the connection between Baptism and Confirmation, candidates are encouraged to be confirmed with their baptismal or given name. The act of reaffirming the name given them at Baptism is a way for them to confirm their baptismal promises. Candidates who decide to take a new Confirmation are asked to select the name of a saint and to write something about the saint they selected.

The Role of the Catechist

The catechists are representatives of the parish community who have volunteered their time for this important ministry. They will spend the most concentrated amount of time with the candidates. They have a desire not only to lead and guide young people to pursue their unique relationship with God and to share their gifts with others. They have a sense of commitment to and affection for the Church. They have been trained in the program's process, have participated in diocesan "Protecting God's Children" program and have completed a criminal background check.

The Role of the Sponsor

The sponsor is an important part of the preparation for Confirmation. At Baptism, parents chose two sponsors or godparents for their child – people who made a commitment to be an example of the faith and help raise them in the Catholic way of life. For Confirmation, we once again invite someone – whether it is one of their godparents or another person – to serve as a sponsor. The sponsor's role in Confirmation involves much more than standing behind the candidate as the bishop confirms. It is to be the beginning, or the continuation, of a lasting relationship of mentoring.

A sponsor must be a fully initiated Catholic (one who has celebrated Baptism, Eucharist, & Confirmation) who leads a life in harmony with the faith and the role to be undertaken. It is recommended that the sponsor have local residency, to ensure consistent involvement throughout the Confirmation process. They must also have a positive and comfortable relationship with the candidate. A sponsor may not be the parent of the one to be confirmed.

The sponsor is to be selected prior to the start of Year I classes. There is a Sponsor Certificate form that is required to be completed by the Sponsor's parish priest and submitted to us along with all the other Confirmation Application paperwork by July 1st.

Service – Individual

Christian love is manifested in service to other people. Jesus came as one who serves. He declared that, at the end of time, he will judge us on how well we have served him through other people. A vital part of the candidates' preparation for living a full Christian life is developing a habit of service. We encourage the candidates to undertake meaningful and, preferably, ongoing service in conjunction with their study of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. **A minimum of 10 hours of individual service is required over the 2 year period of Confirmation preparation.**

Parents and sponsors should assist the candidates in discussing ideas for service and helping them to experience different opportunities. In addition, the parish will offer opportunities for the youth to come together to carry out service projects. Candidates need to look for opportunities where they are really making a difference in the community. Helping at the soup kitchen, assisting with the Habitat of Humanity by building homes, visiting the elderly in nursing homes are a few of the volunteer opportunities available in our community. To report individual hours – the candidate must complete the Service Hours Record form found on the parish website and submit the completed form to us.

Service – Group & Parish Projects

Each Catechist will be responsible for coordinating two group projects for her/his class. Attendance at the class Group Project is expected. If the candidate cannot attend the Group Project with his/her class, s/he will need to be made to attend with another class or participate in an approved parish service project.

Standards Expected of Our Youth

- Attend weekly Mass. On the night the groups meet, the youth are encouraged to attend the 12:00 pm Sunday Teen Mass.
- Respect for catechists, adults, fellow confirmation candidates, the building and all church property.
- Being on time and having regular attendance.
- The use of all electronic devices is strictly prohibited during Mass and the sessions. These items will be confiscated if they are seen being used. Texting or using one's phone is not appropriate or respectful behavior during Mass or class time.
- There will be zero tolerance for disrespectful, violent, or abusive behavior of any type. Bullying, in particular, will not be tolerated.
- There will be zero tolerance of harassment of any kind, including, but not limited to, verbal harassment, gender bias, threats, sexual harassment, and foul language.
- There will be zero tolerance for substance abuse of any kind, including, but not limited to drugs, inhalants, alcohol, and tobacco.
- No object which may be construed as a weapon or use of said object as a weapon will be tolerated on-site at parish programs.