

Holy Spirit Catholic Church



Confirmation Handbook

Philosophy of Holy Spirit's Parish Religious Education Program

With and through our Christian community, Holy Spirit's Parish Religious Education Program (PREP) strives to cultivate in all participants:

- **A deep knowledge of the faith;**
 - o *Achieved through lecture, extracurricular studies, and a homelife that cultivates the faith*
- **Full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical life;**
 - o *Desire and decision to stay close to the sacraments*
- **Moral formation;**
 - o *Understanding morality headed into their most formidable years*
- **An attitude of prayer and contemplation;**
 - o *Prayer persists outside of PREP classes*
- **A true belonging to our Christian community;**
 - o *Volunteering with Parish functions, helping the community, and supporting those in need*
- **Active participation in the life and mission of the Church.**
 - o *Weekly attendance at Mass, evangelization when appropriate, and continuing education in the faith*

Requirements of the Confirmation Program

Each candidate attends Confirmation classes for two consecutive years (7th and 8th) in order to fully and faithfully profess the beliefs of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church in the Sacrament of Confirmation. Regular class attendance and participation in formation activities are extremely important.

All Confirmation Candidates are expected to have the willingness to learn and actively participate in the program throughout the entire school year. If you know that your child will be absent from class for an excusable occurrence, please contact the DRE (Mr. Zugay) and the Parish Outreach Coordinator (Mrs. Serio). Due to the structure of the Confirmation program's classes, it is difficult to "make-up" lessons. **We ask that students who miss class for excusable reasons (illness, family vacation, etc.) learn a new prayer discipline and write a one (1) paragraph summary.** Examples include, but are not limited to: particular mysteries of the rosary, the Divine Mercy Chaplet, participating in a Holy Hour, fasting and abstinence of meat for a day, Lectio Divina, meditative prayer, etc.

The world is busy, complicated, and stressful, but by enrolling in this program you as parents/guardians have made a commitment to the promise that was made at your child's baptism: to ensure your child is raised in the faith. Confirmation is the third and final Sacrament of initiation into the Church, it is a critical stage in faith development. I implore you to do your best to clear the calendar for these times in order to get your students to class and events (retreats, pilgrimage).

Furthermore, adherence to the standards of the faith should be practiced at home as well. Living as a Catholic is a marathon, not a sprint. A deep-seeded attachment to the faith cannot be attained solely by attending PREP class two-times per month.

Program Description

Students in 7th and 8th grade will receive lecture separately for most of the year as well as some combined classes and presentations. During our in-person gatherings, special instructional lessons and other supplemental activities

will be used to teach and reinforce the curriculum. In 7th grade, the teacher(s) will deliver a topic of importance that is outside the common zone of awareness of students (ex., how is the liturgical calendar formed? What is the structure of the Church and why is it formed this way? How can scripture help us grow in faith?) The 8th grade curriculum is crowd sourced. Students will be asked on the first day of class what they do not understand, know, like, comprehend about the faith and the teacher will develop specific lectures to edify the students about these questions. Students may be required to complete some small “homework” assignments; however, unlike previous years, students will not be required to perform online lessons during weeks where in-person classes are not scheduled.

Mentoring Program

In years past, we have had a mentoring program where an adult from the Parish would meet with a Confirmation student for a minimum of once a month for a minimum of 20 minutes per visit.

However, due to an overall lack of volunteers for this position, we will be putting the mentoring program on hold for 2024-25. 8th graders are strongly encouraged to continue to foster a relationship with their mentor from last year, but on-campus meetings is not a mandatory requirement for this PREP year. This is a decision that was difficult to make, but in addition to the substantial time commitment, it is unfair to our wonderful volunteers to try to develop a bond with 4 or 5 different students. If you have a particularly strong interest in your student having a mentor, or if you are interested in providing this service in future years to help the youth of our Parish, please be sure to reach out to Mr. Zugay directly.

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend the in-person classes regularly, engage in class, perform homework assignments in a timely manner, attend the annual pilgrimage, attend the annual grade-specific retreat, and participate in the mentoring program. The 2024-25 schedule is included in this document.

Sunday Liturgy (Mass)

Sunday Liturgy (Mass), in which we are privileged and honored to receive Christ in the Eucharist, is the Source and Summit of our Catholic Faith. It is the place where, within our faith community, we are fed by both the Word of God and the Bread of Life, strengthening us in Christ’s love so that we may go into our homes, schools, work place and community spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ. Because Mass attendance is vital to our Catholic faith formation, candidates who do not show a commitment to attend Sunday Mass **may not** be considered ready for Confirmation.

This cannot be stressed enough so it is being given another line: Regular weekly attendance at Mass is of the utmost importance.

Reconciliation

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is a wonderful gift of Jesus Christ to His Church where we can experience and receive God’s love, mercy, and forgiveness. Candidates are encouraged to frequent the sacrament (quarterly at minimum) and are expected to attend our Parish Reconciliation Services during Advent and Lent. Remember that receiving the Eucharist in a state of mortal sin is considered Sacrilege, the worst of all sins. Father Dijo is also available for confessions on Wednesday after 6pm Mass (6:30-7pm) and Saturday after 4pm Mass (5:00-5:30pm) or by appointment.

Retreat(s)

Confirmation Candidates are expected to attend the Confirmation Retreat associated with their grade. For 2024-25, we will again be combining our retreat with St. Paul (Annville). **Though subject to change, the scheduled dates for our retreats are as follows:**

- 7th: April 5th (10 am to 4pm)
- 8th: October 19th (8am to 4 pm, Mass at St. Paul's at 5pm and a s'more social afterward are optional but **very** strongly encouraged)

Specifics on itinerary and timelines will be provided closer to the respective dates. **While these retreats are considered mandatory parts of the curriculum, please contact the Confirmation DRE if your child is unable to attend.**

Pilgrimage

Confirmation candidates are also required to visit a shrine or holy site each year during their sacramental preparation. To assist with this requirement, our tentative destination this year is our Lady of Czestochowa Shrine in Doylestown, PA. Coordination with the shrine is ongoing and a date has not been formally selected, but the date will be either April 27 or May 4, 2025. Holy Spirit Parish will coordinate transportation (bus) to and from the site, but students are expected to provide their own lunches. There may be a need for adult chaperones, but these adults must have Diocesan child-safety clearances.

Students who are unable to attend the pilgrimage trip are required to make their own visit to a shrine of their choosing. This is a wonderful opportunity for a family trip to a holy site. Students who have a reasonable excuse to retreat on their own (i.e., family vacation/travel will be near a shrine/holy site, strong desire to visit a specific shrine) may do so. These students must take a photograph at the shrine and write a short (approximately 1-page) summary of their visit.

Here is a short list of local shrines, but please feel free to visit others:

National Shrine of St. John Neumann

At the Parish of Saint Peter the Apostle
1019 North Fifth Street
Philadelphia Pa 19123
1-215-627-3080
SJNoffice@comcast.net
<http://www.stjohnneumann.org/>

National Centre for Padre Pio

111 Barto Road
Barto, PA 19504
610-845-3000
<https://www.padrepio.org/>

Basilica of the National Shrine of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton

333 South Seton Avenue
Emmitsburg, MD 21727-9297 USA

Confirmation Name and Saint Report

As Catholics, we use icons (pictures, statues) as reminders of the heroes of our faith much the way we may have photographs of our family members – both living and deceased – to remind us of the lineage and history that we came from. For Confirmation, it is customary to take a saint’s name as a model of inspiration as well as to adopt that saint as a patron to whom a special spiritual relationship can be formed. This name should be chosen with much thought and prayer. It is recommended that students research several saints, as well as engage in prayer to/with the saints, to help select one. St. Paul reminds us that “we have been called to be saints” (1 Cor 1:2) and our Confirmation Patron Saint is the model that we strive for.

Entering 2024-5, 8th graders should already have picked a name; however, if there has been a strong spiritual transformation resulting in the desire to change to a different saint, that is okay. 7th graders will be expected to have a patron saint selected by around All Saints’ Day, which is a few days after our October 27th in-person class.

When selecting a confirmation name, designate the specific person. For example, there are quite a few “Saint Johns” out there, be sure to select one in particular – St. John the Baptist, St. John the Apostle, etc.

While it is not terribly common, young ladies may select male patrons and young men may select female patrons. For example, maybe a young lady desires to be a veterinarian and would like the help of the intercession of St. Francis of Assisi (the Patron Saint of animals) or a young man has a strong skillset for music and wants to lean on the intercession of St. Cecelia (the Patron Saint of music). The point of the saint selection is to build a spiritual bond with a brother or sister in Christ, however that may come to pass.

The use of your baptismal name, if already after a Saint, can serve to further emphasize the three-fold process of Christian initiation – Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation – but is not necessary. The name chosen must be a blessed or canonized Christian saint. A canonized Christian Saint is a man or a woman who has displayed heroic virtue and has been recognized by the Church. **Be sure to check out the many references in our Parish library. To register for the library, please email Library@hspalmyra.com**

After the saint name has been selected, an approximately 1-page report is requested. The report must be typed, double spaced, in 12-point Times New Roman font. While this report should include some factual statements about the saint, it should fall short of a biography. Instead, detail the reasons why the saint was selected to be your patron, how you have been inspired by their life, and how you intend to use this inspiration going forward.

The report must include the following topics:

- Who is the saint? (When and where did he or she live, family life, job, etc?)
- What have you learned about this Saint through your research?
- Why did you select this Saint to represent your faith journey?
- How is this person a good role model for you to follow as a confirmed Catholic?
- How are you actively growing in relationship with this saint (specific prayers, replicating disciplines he/she participated in, obtaining icons, etc.)?
- Include the resources from which you obtained your information (website(s), book(s), etc.). Does **not** have to be an MLLA format citation page.

The Saint report is due by the end of the first year of formation (7th grade) and no later than the start of the second year (8th grade).

Sponsors

Each confirmation candidate will choose a sponsor to assist him or her in preparation for the sacrament, stand with him or her while they are confirmed and continue to guide them in their spiritual journey. The sponsor should be one whose positive influence on the student is permanent and strong; hence not just an honorary title but has the responsibility of setting a good example of Catholic living. At Baptism, Godparents are asked by the priest if they accept the responsibility to help rear the child in the faith being professed; a Confirmation sponsor carries a similar role, only this time it is to continue to help a fully-initiated Catholic stay straight on the path instead of raising them in the faith. It is important to pick a sponsor early in the process, so the student may have the benefit of someone who is “walking with them” through the formation process.

Confirmation Sponsors must:

- Be 16 years of age or older
- Have been baptized and confirmed in the Catholic Church
- Worship at Sunday Mass regularly
- Receive the Sacraments frequently
- Be an active participant in parish life and community service
- If married, are married by the laws of the Catholic Church and in the presence of a Catholic priest
- Submit a Sponsor Letter of Eligibility from his/her own parish

Canon law does not permit a parent to be a sponsor. The Church, however, does encourage that one of the Baptismal Godparents be considered as a sponsor. This manifests the sacramental link between Baptism and Confirmation. Siblings are permitted so long as they meet the pre-requisites listed above. Once again, this is not a requirement.

If the sponsor is not a parishioner of Holy Spirit, a Confirmation Sponsor’s Letter of Eligibility Form must be requested and provided to us by January 31st of the student’s 8th grade year. Please ask your sponsor to request this immediately to avoid delays. **The sponsor simply tells their parish office that they need to submit a letter of eligibility to be a Confirmation sponsor, and that Parish’s staff will take care of the rest.**

In the event that a proxy sponsor must be used, the proxy must adhere to all of the qualifications of an actual sponsor. **Canon Law does not permit a Confirmand’s parent to be a proxy.**

Interview

Traditionally, each candidate will be interviewed by the Pastor and/or DRE to determine his/her readiness to receive the sacrament. The interview will evaluate the candidate’s understanding of basic Catholic teaching as well as what it means to be a disciple of Christ. In addition, the Bishop may question the candidates on the day of the Confirmation Mass.

Expectations and Behavior

Holy Spirit’s PREP staff and volunteers prepare a quality program of Religious Formation presented in an atmosphere of respect and Christian Community. We expect all students to listen attentively and be prepared to

participate fully in Confirmation Classes. Proper conduct and respect of others: adults, students, and property are expected at all times of all students. We expect all participants to behave in a manner exemplifying members of the Body of Christ.

Dress for Confirmation

Boys – suit and tie or dress pants and dress shirt with tie and dress shoes (sports jacket /suit jacket is optional)

Girls – dress or skirt & blouse (no bare shoulders, no very short dresses) and dress shoes (no flip flops)

*** Boys & Girls - please do not put makeup on forehead, it makes it hard for the oil to stick.*

*** Brush/style hair away from forehead*

**It is appropriate for each Confirmand to have a bit of white on to symbolize the sacramental link between Baptism and Confirmation, but not required.*

Works of Mercy Hours (Service Projects)

Confirmation Students are expected to complete 24 hours of Christian/community service during their two years of confirmation preparation. It is suggested that students complete 12 hours in 7th grade and 12 hours in 8th grade. Due dates are provided on the checklist on the last page of this handbook. The intent of service projects is for the candidates to experience *how important they are as witnesses to the fulfillment of Christ's mission*. These service opportunities should model the mind and heart of Christ by selflessly and lovingly helping those in need and set a pattern for future service.

Students can perform a variety of activities, but we ask that **no single activity in any given year be MORE than 25%** of the total required hours. For example, 10 hours at Fish Fry in one year does not count, but 5 hours each year (7th and 8th grade) does. Our parish offers ample opportunities for service, but activities are not limited to the parish. Students are strongly encouraged to seek opportunities to serve in their school and community.

Please keep your child's safety in mind when choosing a service project. Never drop a child off with the expectation of responsible adults that hold background clearances being present unless you have been ***specifically told this in a church permission slip***. All other projects are under the parents' discretion and responsibility. Candidates that are completing projects that are not on the list below are encouraged to discuss the project with the Catechist or the DRE to ensure the project will be approved. Always have your child sign up ahead of time for projects and contact the project's leader to inform that person of their presence.

Upon completion of service projects, students are required to report the hours using the **Simplified Works of Mercy hours** form (a copy is provided in the back of this handbook). We require that students choose one service project and complete a more extensive **Report of Service Project Form**. The form provides opportunities for students to better explore what their service has meant to others and to them. Parents are required to review the form for content and neatness before signing it. The Service Project can be performed in either 7th or 8th grade.

The following is a list of suggested service projects:

- Raking leaves and/or mowing grass for elderly or needy neighbors without pay.
- Volunteering at a soup kitchen
- Volunteering at Caring Cupboard
- Providing babysitting services to someone in need without pay
- Visits to a nursing home
- Helping at church when the need is presented
- Shoveling snow for needy neighbors without pay
- PREP classroom and/or Office aides
- Vacation Bible School help
- Fish Fry Assistance
- Parish Festival volunteering
- Altar Server
- Sparkling Hearts Ministry (cleaning the church)

These are just some examples. Again, if not listed please discuss the project with the Catechist or the DRE to ensure the project will be approved.

Autobiography

8th grade Confirmation candidates are required to submit a brief autobiography which must contain the following information:

- Name & pertinent information about the student (age, family, school, interests, activities).
- Favorite Service Project(s) and provide a few reasons why
- Confirmation Sponsor and what the student admires about him/her
- Patron Saint name selection and why
- What has the student learned about their faith during Confirmation preparation
- 'I am saying "Yes" to Confirmation because...'
- 'My Parish can continue to support me by...'

The biography must be:

- Typed
- Paragraph form
- Must contain a picture of the Confirmation candidate
- It should be ½ to ¾ sheet of paper to allow room for your picture which will be displayed with your biography for all parishioners to see. You can print the picture directly onto the page or affix one at the bottom of the page.

The biography will be posted in our Narthex, so our parishioners can get to know and pray for our confirmands.
Due by March 16, 2025.

Letters to the Bishop

8th Grade Confirmation Candidates are required to write a letter requesting Confirmation. The letter is **due by February 2, 2024**. You will write a letter addressed to the Most Reverend Bishop Timothy Senior (*Dear Bishop Senior*). Include the following information when writing these letters:

- Name, family, interests
- Why I want to be Confirmed
- My favorite service project and why
- What Saint I chose for my Confirmation name and why
- The person I chose to be my Confirmation Sponsor and why
- Something I learned this year about my faith
- My hopes for my future and my faith

Remember to sign your name in your own handwriting (not a typed name on the computer). This will personalize your letter. The DRE will forward the letters to Bishop Gainer. **Parents, please proof your child's letter.**

Simplified Works of Mercy Hours Form

Directions: Please complete this form for every service project completed. Please print neatly.

Your Name: _____

Grade: _____

Date(s) of Project: _____

The number of hours I did on this project is: _____

Briefly describe your service (include location): Example: raked leaves for elderly neighbor at their house.

Student Signature: _____

Parent Signature: _____

Report on Service Project

Directions: Please choose **one** service project and complete all the items below regarding the work you did. Please print neatly. You may add pages if needed.

Name _____ Date(s) of Project _____ Grade _____

Parent Signature _____ Project Lead's Signature _____

1. The number of hours I did on this project is _____.

2. Describe your service (include location)

3. By my service, I learned that _____

4. By my service, I realize that other people _____

5. I also learned that Christ _____

6. I was surprised that I _____

7. The hardest part of the job I did was _____

8. The best part of the job I did was _____

9. The Corporal and/or Spiritual Work of Mercy that I mostly did through this project was _____ because _____

10. I plan to do this again: YES NO (circle one) **Student Signature** _____

Corporal Works of Mercy: Feed the Hungry, Give Drink to the Thirsty, Clothe the Naked, Visit the Sick, Visit the Imprisoned, Shelter the Homeless, Bury the Dead.

Spiritual Works of Mercy: Admonish the Sinner, Instruct the Ignorant, Counsel the Doubtful, Forgive all Injuries, Comfort the Sorrowful, Bear Wrongs Patiently, Pray for the Living and the Dead.

Confirmation Requirement Checklist

_____ **Choose a Sponsor**

_____ **Sponsor Certificate** - Due January 31st of 8th grade year

_____ **Choose Confirmation name** – Due around All Saint’s Day of 7th grade year

_____ **Complete Saint Report** – Due prior to 8th grade year

_____ **Letter to the Bishop** - Due April 1st of 8th grade year

_____ **Autobiography with picture** - Due April 1st of 8th grade year

Works of Mercy Hours (recommended hourly breakdown):

_____ 12 Works of Mercy Hours Due by the last class of 7th grade

_____ 12 Works of Mercy Hours due by last class of 8th grade

****It is requested that all deliverables be submitted digitally (PDFs preferred).**

If you are unable to submit digitally, please contact the DRE.

****Deliverables should be emailed to both:**

Mr. Logan Zugay (Confirmation@HSPalmyra.com) &

Mrs. Holly Serio (Outreach@HSPalmyra.com)