

The Role of *Parents*

Dear parents,

Just as your child grows physically, intellectually, and emotionally, so too, he or she grows spiritually. As a parent responsible for the development of your child, you try to meet all of his or her changing needs. You foster and direct spiritual growth by the atmosphere in your home, the example of your life, and the celebration of the sacraments. You have seen that your child has been initiated into the faith through Baptism and the Eucharist. Now your young teenager is at the stage of **strengthening and reaffirming his or her commitment to the faith** through the Sacrament of Confirmation. The elements of our parish preparation program for the sacrament, including the textbook, *Confirmed in the Spirit*, by Loyola Press, will assist you in giving your teen a better understanding of Confirmation, and will help him or her **lead a more active, responsible Christian life.**

The goal of the sacramental preparation program is to help young people be receptive and responsive to the graces and challenges of the Sacrament of Confirmation. They learn that it is a Sacrament of Initiation that deepens their relationship with the Church and commitment to being active members. They become more aware of the presence and action of the Spirit and his gifts within them, which empower them to live more fully as Jesus did. They will discover ways to fulfill the specific responsibilities that are theirs as Christians.

Throughout the preparation process, we also hope to give guidance to all those involved in the formation of the candidates and in the celebration of the sacrament so that Confirmation becomes a meaningful faith experience for the candidates, the family, and the parish community. At the same time, we aim to equip the candidates with the knowledge and attitudes necessary for the lifelong process of conversion to Christ.

Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to be our advocate and helper. At Pentecost this Spirit was poured out on the first believers, making them witnesses full of faith and courage. At Baptism the Holy Spirit comes upon us, and at Confirmation we are anointed in the strength of this Spirit and sent to carry on Christ's mission.

The Spirit in us is the same Spirit who anointed Jesus to redeem the world and bring about the kingdom of the Father through loving service. **The Holy Spirit and his gifts help us to live our baptismal promises, grow into the likeness of Christ, and share his mission.** We are united with other Spirit-filled people in the Church, the Body of Christ. Together we spread the message of the Good News, we worship at the Eucharist, we support one another in community, and we give service to those in need.

As young teens struggle to clarify their own convictions, attitudes, and values, parents are their chief models. Faith is caught more than taught. In undertaking more seriously your role of preparing your teenager for Confirmation, consider these questions:

- Do I keep lines of communication open with my teenager?
- Do I make time for prayer, both private and communal?
- Do I actively participate in the sacramental life of the Church?
- Do I try to grow in knowledge of the faith and share it with my family?
- Do I give loving service to those inside and outside my family circle?
- Am I involved with parish activities as much as I could be?

We look forward to sharing with you this time of spiritual growth in the life of your child.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. Marty O'Donovan
Pastor

Susan Doubet
Director of Religious Education

Mary Rehfeld
Principal

The Church teaches that parents are the first and foremost teachers of faith for their children. As your child journeys through the process of preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation, there are opportunities for you to guide, accompany, and learn from him or her.

- Of primary importance: attend Sunday liturgy. Invite a friend or relative who does not participate in Mass to go to church and breakfast with you.
- Talk with your child about the faith content he or she is learning in religion class. Learn something new yourself! See the parish bulletin or website for details about the opportunities available.
- Encourage your child in their practice of personal daily prayer and the use of the Confirmation journal. Perhaps you would be interested in exploring the practice of contemplative prayer, offered at FHC every Wednesday morning from 9-10 a.m. in the Bell Tower. Newcomers and beginners are welcome!
- Witness to your own faith in your daily words and actions.
- Pray with your children. Include in your family prayers those who are in need around the world.
- Participate in the faith-sharing component of the preparation process, using the "Candidate/Sponsor Sheets" provided for sponsors. These faith-sharing conversations offer a wonderful opportunity for parents to lead their children to love and serve God in daily life.
- Guide your child's choice of a Confirmation name and a faith-filled sponsor.
- Support (and join) your son or daughter in planning and performing Christian service. For example, volunteer as a family to serve at a hot-meals center or to clean the home of an elderly person.
- Help out at a parish social function or participate in it.
- Support a parishioner, neighbor or friend who needs encouragement, sympathy, or material help.
- Decide how you can strengthen your bond with the parish community and commitment to the mission of the Church. Take action to do so.
- Consider how you can grow as a Christian: For what do you need to be forgiven? What virtue can you ask God to help you develop?
- Check out the following resources from the St. Anthony Messenger online website at www.americancatholic.org :
 - Article: *Confirmation- What's A Parent to Do?*
www.americancatholic.org/Messenger/May2002/Feature2.asp
 - Article: *Confirmation: Sacrament of the Spirit*
www.americancatholic.org/newsletters/mm/ap0898.asp
 - Youth Update: *Confirmation: Seven Symbols in One Sacrament*
<http://www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/YU/ay0497.asp>
 - Article: *Six Ways to be Truly Catholic*
www.americancatholic.org/Messenger/Jun1999/feature1.asp