

## YOUTH MINISTRY OFFICE

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Dear Parents and Candidates:

Welcome to the second year of the Confirmation program at St. Columba! I can't believe how fast the first year went. Before you know it these candidates will be getting confirmed.

We are excited to share this journey of faith with you and your family as you prepare to receive the sacrament of Confirmation. As you will see, Confirmation preparation involves learning, sharing, serving, spiritual growth, and fellowship! You will be given the opportunity to learn more about your Catholic faith and what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Confirmation is the Sacrament in which one is enriched by the gift of the Holy Spirit and bound more perfectly to the Church. It strengthens us and obliges us to be witnesses to Christ by word and deed and to spread and defend the faith.

Confirmation is the Sacrament that perfects Baptismal grace; it is the sacrament which gives us a fuller participation in the Holy Spirit in order to root us more deeply as children of God, incorporates us more firmly into Christ, strengthen our bond with the Church, associate us more closely with her mission, and help us to bear witness to the Christian faith in words accompanied by deeds.

Confirmation, like Baptism, imprints a spiritual mark or indelible character on the Christian soul; for this reason one can receive this sacrament only once.

A Christian does not live as a child of God through his or her own efforts alone, but through the grace of God. We see this in a practical way when we look back on our own lives and the lives of others, even the lives of saints. Therefore, it is our duty to seek the grace that God offers us in order to live our lives as Christians in the way that God intends. When we fully participate in His Church through the Sacraments and through our involvement in our community, we ARE the Body of Christ.

St. Columba unequivocally recognizes the parents' role as primary educators of their children in the faith. The Church has a responsibility to not only support parents in this role but to assist parents, as well. We have attempted to create a program designed to best support and assist our parents. We do not want the faith formation program at St. Columba to be a replacement of the parents' role as primary educator. Instead, we hope to stand beside and partner with our parents in helping to lead your teen closer to Christ. What follows in the next few pages is what we offer at St. Columba to assist you in leading your teen in forming their faith, in sacramental formation, and in active parish life through Confirmation.

The program that our parish has developed, as listed below, is the norm or standard whereby we can see if our youth understand the necessary material, participation, and spiritual life beneficial to being confirmed.

Thank you for allowing us to assist you in preparing for Confirmation.

Sincerely in Christ,

Doug Martin  
Coordinator of Faith Formation

## **Who May Be Confirmed?**

Confirmation candidates:

- the Archdiocese of Mobile requires that a Candidate be in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade or above at the time of Confirmation
- have received the sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation, and Eucharist.
- are practicing their faith by attending Mass each week and on Holy Days
- are in the state of grace (goes to Confession once per month)
- demonstrates a knowledge and understanding of the responsibilities of a member of the Catholic Church
- are aware of the initiation aspect of the Sacrament of Confirmation and are committed to continuing the faithful practice and study of their religion
- **have a sincere desire to receive the sacrament** as well as an appreciation of sacramental life.
- **register with their parish for the sacrament of Confirmation (using the Faith Formation registration form)**

## **CONFIRMATION CANDIDATE EXPECTATIONS for the SECOND YEAR at a glance**

- participate in weekly Mass
- participate in Life Nights and other activities within the parish community this year
- participate in the Candidate sessions called Journey nights
- participate in the Confirmation retreat in January
- participate in the Candidate/Sponsor exercises
- be regularly involved in service to the parish, their school and their community

**Components of the Confirmation Program**  
**Journey Schedule (Year 2)**

Session 1 – Candidate	September 14, 2016 from 6-8 PM in O’Hara Hall
Session 2 – Candidate	October 12, 2016 from 6-8 PM in O’Hara Hall
Session 3 – Candidate	November 9, 2016 from 6-8 PM in O’Hara Hall
Session 4 – Candidate	December 14, 2016 from 6-8 PM in O’Hara Hall
<i>Year 2 Retreat</i>	January 14-15, 2017 at St. Columba Saturday 6:00 PM to Sunday 6:00PM
Session 5 – Candidate	February 8, 2017 from 6-8 PM in O’Hara Hall
Session 6 – Candidate	March 8, 2017 from 6-8 PM in O’Hara Hall
Session 7 – Candidate	April 19, 2017 from 6-8 PM in O’Hara Hall
Session 8 - Candidate	May 10, 2017 from 6-8 PM in O’Hara Hall
Candidate/Parent Interviews	June 13-14, 2017 from 4-7 PM in the Main Office
Confirmation	August or September of 2017 (we are waiting for an approved date from the Archbishop)

**Weekly attendance at Mass**

At the center of the Catholic Christian faith is the celebration of the Eucharist, the real presence of Christ in the bread, wine and the people who eat His body and blood. It is at Mass, at Liturgy, where we come together with all of our Catholic Christian friends to celebrate as one church. It is only fitting for the people of our parish community to celebrate and walk with you on your journey toward being a full member. Weekly attendance at Mass is therefore, expected of candidates and their families.

**Service & Outreach**

We are called as Christians to the service of others. In years past, candidates have had to fulfill a certain number of service hours and have the person they

volunteered to help sign a sheet showing their service. We do not ask our candidates for this. Instead, we ask that each candidate do some service each month, and at the end of each year write a paragraph on what they did for service and what they learned that year of serving.

### **Journey Nights**

Beginning in the second year of Confirmation formation, we will have monthly gatherings in small groups called *Saint Communities* for learning, sharing, serving, spiritual growth, and fellowship. In these small groups we will break open the teaching on a more intimate level. We will be using the online series *Decision Point* by Matthew Kelly for teaching and discussion each meeting. Each night will begin at 6:00 pm and will around 8:00 pm. We ask that every effort be made to attend each one, since there are only 8 classes in one year, missing just one night means missing an incredible amount of information, not to mention getting to spend time with other Catholic teens in the process.

### **Life Nights**

Life Nights are from 6:30 PM until 8:30 PM most Sunday nights (please see our calendar). We encourage our youth attend any Mass they prefer, we especially encourage youth to attend with their families, whichever Mass that may be. Weekly Mass attendance and frequent reconciliation are encouraged.

Our evening begins with a Youth Mass at 5:00PM directed specifically towards teens, which is followed immediately by the Life Night. The primary objective is to encourage teens to realize a deeper relationship with Christ and to challenge them to live their faith as they carry out their daily lives. Teens experience this sharing in an atmosphere of love and acceptance from their peers and the adult leaders who are there to assist them in their journey.

Candidates are encouraged to attend Life Nights for the two years leading up to the celebration of the sacrament. Because a lot of information is presented at each Wednesday night Faith Formation session, we ask that children attend each session and that parents reinforce the lesson material at home. If a child must miss more than one-fourth of the sessions (more than 7 each year), parents should contact the Faith Formation team to find out how the missed material can be made up.

Extenuating circumstances will be handled on an individual basis in consultation with the pastor and Faith Formation team.

### **Retreats**

Retreats are such an important part of the Confirmation process; they are even important in life. How many times do we look forward to a vacation from school or from our everyday lives? We go to the beach, or the mountains, Hawaii, Disney World, just about anywhere to “get away” and recharge our batteries.

Retreats are intended to do the same. They give people the chance to “get away” from things that prevent them from focusing on our Lord. Retreats allow candidates to go away to have fun, relax, but more importantly, to recharge the spiritual battery. When you return from retreat, you can be guaranteed that your life will be changed.

We ask that each Candidate attend the retreat which starts on Saturday and ends Sunday of Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday in January of 2017. Please mark your calendars and make every effort to attend. If a Candidate misses this retreat they will be asked to “make up” the retreat by attending a similar retreat at another time, possibly in another parish.

### **Sponsors**

Sponsors are people who you can rely on during your faith journey. They should be people with a deep commitment to the Catholic faith and who are active, confirmed members of their parish. They should be willing to listen to you, help you answer questions, and be willing to share their faith and example with you. Sponsors are expected to maintain REGULAR contact with their candidate to not only pray, but to socialize and develop a stronger relationship.

Each candidate will be asked to participate in four separate exercises with their sponsor. These assignments are in this packet (and online).

## Questions Frequently Asked

### **About St. Columba's Confirmation Program**

#### **What is the Sacrament of Confirmation?**

Confirmation is a sacrament in which those who have been baptized receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit, Whom the Lord sent upon His apostles at Pentecost. It is a sacrament that celebrates God's special strengths and gifts in those who have been baptized. Confirmation is the completion of Baptism, one step in the process of initiating new members into the community of faith. It is a time to affirm one's Christian identity and commit to serving the community.

#### **How often is the Sacrament of Confirmation celebrated at St. Columba?**

The Archbishop celebrates the sacrament of Confirmation here at St. Columba every two years. The next scheduled time to celebrate the sacrament is August or September of 2017. The Archbishop sets the date for Confirmation. We are usually notified of the date during the summer prior to the Confirmation.

#### **Who is eligible to celebrate Confirmation?**

A person who has been baptized, celebrated first Eucharist, is in the 11th grade or older, and is properly prepared may celebrate Confirmation. (Candidates will begin their Confirmation preparation either in the 9th or 10th grade.)

#### **Faith Formation is part of the Confirmation process. What is expected of a Candidate?**

A family's regular participation in our parish program will help the pastor ascertain whether the child is properly disposed for the celebration of Confirmation. Because a lot of information is presented at each Life Night and Journey session, we ask that candidates attend as many Life Nights and sessions as possible and that parents reinforce the material at home. If a child must miss more than one-fourth of the Life Nights (more than 7 each year), parents and/or candidates should contact the Faith Formation team to find out how the missed material can be made up. Extenuating circumstances will be handled on an individual basis in consultation with the pastor and Faith Formation team. We ask that for students

transferring to St. Columba this year please ask your parish where you attended or Catholic school last year to send attendance records so that we will know where to place each student in the process.

### **What happens if a person older than the usual age for Confirmation?**

Students up through the 11th grade will join the normal Confirmation class. Those who are in the 12th grade or who have graduated from high school need to speak to the pastor and Coordinator of Faith Formation to enter the RCIA program.

### **Does the parent(s) of the student need to be a practicing Catholic?**

According to Canon 843, if the youth's parents are not practicing Catholics but wish to have their child celebrate the sacrament, the youth should not be kept from experiencing the sacrament providing the youth is practicing the faith.

Parents are encouraged to participate in the sacramental preparation with their son/daughter.

### **Who gives permission for the youth to celebrate the sacrament if the youth is not living with his/her parents?**

If the child is living with someone other than the parent or legal guardian, the parent or legal guardian must be asked to grant permission before the child prepares to celebrate Confirmation. In the case of joint custody, both parents must grant permission.

### **How do I know if my child is ready to begin the preparation program for the Sacrament of Confirmation?**

Look for these signs of readiness in your child:

- A developing sense of personal responsibility for duties at home, school & church.
- A willingness to help and serve others.
- A personal interest in learning about and practicing the faith.
- A desire to identify himself/herself with Christ in the Catholic Church through the Sacrament of Confirmation.



### **How is the readiness of a youth to celebrate Confirmation determined?**

Before celebrating Confirmation, candidates should be “expected to have undergone a conversion in mind and in action and to have developed a sufficient acquaintance with Christian teaching as well as a spirit of faith and charity” (RCIA 120). We begin the Confirmation process with an interview with the pastoral staff to give the youth an opportunity to express their willingness to enter the process. The closing interviews with the youth and their parents at the end of the process of their second year of preparation will help determine the readiness of the youth. If the determination is made that the youth is not ready, the celebration of Confirmation may be delayed until some future time.

### **Should a person be forced by their parents against their wishes to be confirmed?**

Parents should strongly encourage their youth to participate in the preparation process for Confirmation and make their decision about being confirmed at that time. No one should be forced to be confirmed. In fact, celebrating a sacrament against one’s will would make the sacrament invalid. If a youth does not want to be confirmed, after discussion with his/her parents and the pastor, the wishes of the youth should be respected. There are many reasons for which a person may decide not to be confirmed. It is not automatically a sign that the person has rejected the faith. There will always be another opportunity to celebrate Confirmation at a later time.

### **When should Confirmation be delayed?**

The sacrament of Confirmation should not be delayed unless lack of readiness is clearly indicated. If lack of readiness is clear, Confirmation may be delayed but not refused. If it is delayed, students and parents will be told clearly what aspect of readiness needs to be demonstrated, how that might be accomplished, and when Confirmation might be expected.

## **Instilling a lasting faith beyond the teen years, PARENTS ARE CRUCIAL**

- Parents are the No. 1 influence in helping a teen remains religiously active as a young adult
- Catholic teens with parents committed to practicing their faith are 8 times more likely to be very religious as young adults.
- Catholic teens who say religious faith is important in shaping their daily lives are 5 times more likely to be very religious as young adults.
- Catholic teens who attend faith formation (Life Teen, retreats, etc.) are 1.5 times more likely to be very religious as young adults.
- Catholic teens who have had their own religious experiences are nearly 3 times more likely to be very religious as young adults than those who don't.
- Research in the US has shown that when young people have genuine relationships with adults other than their parents and youth leaders they are more likely to stay involved in their church communities.
- Research shows that the greater a sense of 'belonging' that children and young people feel in their church, the more often they participate in church activities and the more likely they are to remain in the church as they grow up.
- Having a relationship with adults who know your name and are available to listen or provide support and advice when needed would go a long way to strengthening a sense of belonging.
- Young people who are involved in the youth ministry at their local parish and can name five adults in the church other than their youth leaders with whom they have some sort of relationship are more likely to remain religious as young adults.
- Teens who had at least one adult from church make a significant time investment in their lives also were more likely to keep attending church. Youth who stayed in church - by a margin of 46 percent to 28 percent - said five or more adults at church had invested time with them personally and spiritually."

## **What does the Church ask of you, the parent?**

1. Watch for signs of readiness:
  - a. A developing sense of personal responsibility for duties at home, school & church.
  - b. A willingness to help and serve others.
  - c. A personal interest in learning about and practicing the faith.
  - d. A desire to identify himself/herself with Christ in the Catholic Church through the Sacrament of Confirmation.
2. Attend Candidate/Parent sessions with your child and ensure that your child completes assignments.
3. Provide the information needed such as Baptismal certificate, First Communion certificate, etc.
4. Provide the opportunity for the candidate to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation. Also provide for their frequent reception of the Eucharist and Reconciliation.
5. Positively encourage your child to attend Life Nights and other youth events, like retreats, conferences, trips, and Heart Workcamp.
6. Positively encourage your child to attend the Confirmation sessions (Journey nights).
7. Provide the opportunity for and possibly serve with the candidate to participate in service projects.
8. Pray for your child in a very special way during this time of preparation for Confirmation.

## Checklist for Successful Parents

Below is a checklist of some ways you can be a successful Catholic parent. Check all those statements you already do. If some remain unchecked, you may want to consider making them part of your family routine in the future. God bless you in your sacred vocation of parenting!

- 1) Attend weekend Mass as a Family each Sunday.
- 2) Discuss the meaning of Scripture readings and/or the homily after Mass with your children.
- 3) Regularly go to Confession with your family.
- 4) Discuss the beauty and meaning of the Sacraments with your family.
- 5) Say morning/evening prayers and/or the Rosary as a family or individually.
- 6) Read the Scriptures and discuss them.
- 7) Visit Church or participate in a weekday Mass with your children.
- 8) Share what your Catholic faith means to you personally with your family.
- 9) Take an active part in your child's Sacramental preparation and faith formation.
- 10) Be careful to provide ongoing faith formation for your children.
- 11) Say grace before each meal.
- 12) Demonstrate the importance of ongoing faith growth and instruction in your own life by participating in adult faith formation programs, Holy Hours, XLT, Parish Missions, etc.
- 13) Speak often and lovingly of your faith, especially when you feel particularly close to God.
- 14) Take an active part in parish life and encourage your children to do the same.
- 15) Openly share your values and discuss them with your children, listening carefully to their comments.
- 16) Help them develop moral decision making powers appropriate for their maturity by sharing your insights and guiding them without making all the decisions for them.
- 17) By word and example, teach your children how to love and value one another, and seek/offer forgiveness.
- 18) Pray for your family, and ask them to pray for you.