

## A Catechist's Guide to the "Why Be Confirmed?" Retreat



Dear Catechist,

Thank you for your commitment to bring the fullness of our Faith to youth and preparing them for the Sacrament of Confirmation! The Confirmation Retreat, facilitated by Capuchin Youth & Family Ministries, is a unique opportunity for Comfirmandi to reflect and grow in their faith. CYFM offers our partnership to parents, schools, and parishes, to foster the integration of the spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and social dimensions of young people in a respectful, safe, and nurturing environment. Confirmation is a significant step on the spiritual journey of the individual teen; a journey that needs nourishing. The fullness of the retreat experience can only be achieved through continuity and relevance in everyday life. We offer our support to collaborate with parents and Catechists to achieve this mission with teens. Retreats provide a heightened experience of belonging, support of one's faith journey and spiritual encounter. We hope the participants come back to your Parish more excited about and open to their faith. We recognize the need to provide students with opportunities to explore and extend elements of the retreat experience that hold particular meaning or relevance for them. This guide offers both information and suggestions to continue the conversation about Confirmation and the retreat experience with the youth of your Parish in a variety of ways. Thank you for inviting CYFM to participate in your students' journey in their relationship with Christ!



**2013-2014 Retreat Team**

### **Description of "Why Be Confirmed?" Retreat**

The "Why Be Confirmed?" Confirmation retreat is designed to have each student examine his/her relationship with God, and explore his/her attitude toward the sacrament of Confirmation. We then provide different tools necessary for the students to take the next step in their journey in the Catholic faith. The main activities include:

- Introduction to four common attitudes of teenagers preparing for Confirmation
- Small-Group Discussion and Sharing
- Inspiring Young Adult Witness Talks
- Holy Spirit Jeopardy & Tack Walk Activity
- Interactive Prayer Experience



Something that the "Why Be Confirmed?" retreat uniquely offers is these "four common attitudes" of teenagers preparing for Confirmation. These attitudes are embodied in four characters whom we introduced during the retreat. We have developed specific goals for each of the characters identified. They are generalizations and are intended to help retreatants to examine and identify their own attitude as they prepare for Confirmation. They help us to reach out to each retreatant, remaining respectful of the experience he/she brings and the potential he/she has to grow closer to God, regardless of the current status of his/her relationship with God. Here is a summary of the characters we created and presented and the goals for each:

**Sarah:** “My family is very involved in our parish, and I’m totally excited about Confirmation. I’ve picked out a new name and asked my favorite Aunt to be my sponsor. Religious Education class is a bit boring, but I like hanging out with my friends there, and I’m glad I’m getting Confirmed.”

Goals for “Sarah”:

- To internalize her faith (which is already strong externally)
- To get her faith to sink deeper
- To understand the meaning/relevance/importance of the actions she’s already enjoying

**Sam:** “My family goes to Mass but doesn’t pray much at home. My older brother has left the Church. I’m not so sure about all of this Confirmation stuff. I feel like it’s a significant decision, and I’m not sure if I am ready. I have some real questions and don’t want to take this lightly.”

Goals for “Sam”:

- To be affirmed in his questioning
- To see that questioning God is, in fact, interacting and building a relationship with God.
- To consider the idea that God may have given him the questions he’s asking.
- To develop a plan to continue questioning and seeking answers.
- To have skills to answer questions for himself.

**Alex:** “I go to Mass on Christmas and Easter, but my parents aren’t really into religion. My Grandma is the reason I’m getting Confirmed. I’m doing it to keep my family happy. Confirmation = CCD graduation. It’s just a relief to be done with it all and collect some cash for making it through. Goals for “Alex”:

- To see the relevance of faith
- To see that faith and Confirmation have something to offer him.
- To have a sense of hope.



**Jamie:** “I have really given it some thought and I do believe in God and am willing to commit to remaining Catholic. I have had some influential teachers for whom faith is really important, and I’d like to be like them.”

Goals for “Jamie”:

- To be affirmed and encouraged in her faith journey.
- To have a faith experience
- To come to a greater awareness/recognition of God’s presence and action in her life.
- To be motivated to take steps to further develop her relationship with God.

## Practical Suggestions for Following Up With the Students



We walked with your student on his/her faith journey for a brief time, while you as a DRE/Catechist will further their faith journey. Dr. Stephen Smith describes some teenagers' perspective of faith as similar to a teenager's perspective of kitchen wallpaper—it seems nice, and it should not be taken away, but it has no meaning or relevance to his/her life. We hope to help DREs in guiding the students to discover the meaning and relevance of faith in Christ. Here are a few suggestions to following up with the “Why Be Confirmed?” retreat:

### Continue the Conversation

The simple but effective post retreat “debriefing meeting” is an essential opportunity for the confirmandi to talk about the retreat experience, how it affected them, and what they can do with the knowledge and skills gained on the retreat.

Some questions to ask during this debriefing meeting:

- Tell me about the four characters who were introduced.
- Which one did you most identify with?
- What do you remember of the talks that were given?
- Tell me about the “tack walk” in which you participated. Why do you think you did that?
- What did you like most about the retreat?
- What did you learn that might have been new during the retreat?

### Establish Prayer Partners

The establishment of prayer partners is another effective way of extending the senses of community and prayerfulness developed during the retreat. Explain to students that for the next week/month they will be partnered with another student. It will be their responsibility to PRAY for them without letting their partner know that they are praying for them. At the end of that time period, create some kind of ritual in which they reveal to their prayer partner that they have been praying for him/her.

Here are some examples of what you can do for your prayer partner:

Pray for specific things, for example: that they will come closer to God; that they will do well in school; for their happiness...

Give something up for them (like a Lenten sacrifice). You could do something like give up dessert for the week, give up tv or going on the computer for two days.

Do something extra for your prayer partner: Say a decade of the rosary, help your family by doing an extra chore without being asked, spend extra time studying or doing a chore for an elderly neighbor, etc.

## Live Out the Gospel

It is important to remember that, as adults in the Church, we are called to live and act as Jesus did. In order to do this, young people need to remember to consider the needs of others in addition to their own needs. Provide teens with concrete examples of ways in which they can live out the Gospel in their own community, food pantries, nursing homes, and other ministry sites are always in need of volunteers. Connect their service hours requirement to the lifestyle that Catholics are called to live.

## Provide the Example

St. Francis of Assisi famously said, “Preach the Gospel at all times, and if necessary, use words.” Adults with strong faith within your Parish can be great demonstrations to teens of faith observed and a faith lived.

Find caring adults that are fire up to mentor these youth. It must be an adult that the youth can feel comfortable sharing with and an adult that will be invested in what the youth want. They do not necessarily need to commit to do everything and be at everything, they just need to be there to disciple those youth and love them through the difficulties and temptations that come when they return home from the retreat. Finding this adult will send a message to the youth that the parish cares, but will also be the stable factor when the youth start to struggle at times. Having adults go with youth to big events is a great way to set this up beforehand.



## Further Information and Resources:

### More Retreats!

Another retreat or reflection day is a common request from teens. Your students can register individually for our popular **7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Overnight Retreats** at CYFM. These four retreats are correlated to the Archdiocese of New York *Guidelines for Catechesis for Grades Seven and Eight*, compliment what you are offering in your religion classes, and are a perfect way for the Comfirmandi to further explore and affirm their faith.

Alternatively, Parishes can offer their own mini-retreat or reflection days. These can be specifically geared to relevant issues such as prayer, the Bible, relaxation, stress/time management, personal spirituality, and reconciliation. Even where other pressures prohibit a full day program for students, some parishes have organized shorter workshops in these important renewal skills.

Check out our website to see what else we offer for teens:

[www.cyfm.org](http://www.cyfm.org)

Resources to serve the larger community:

<http://www.newyorkcares.org/>

<http://www.dosomething.org/>

<http://www.catholiccharitiesny.org/>

<http://crs.org/about/>



*“Teachers provide instruction in the original sense of the term, that is, they make a substantial contribution to building the personality; they educate in the sense of the ancient Socratic image, helping students to discover and to make use of the skills and gifts of each one... You have been called to teach. This is a vocation, a Christian vocation... There, at your teacher’s chair and desk, God has called you by name to an indispensable service to the truth.”*

Pope John Paul II on October 14, 2001