

Parent's Guide "Why Be Confirmed?" Retreat

Dear Parent/Guardian,

We were honored to be a part of your child's preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation through their recent retreat with us. We offer this follow up to assist you in helping your child to make the most of the retreat experience. The confirmation retreat facilitated by Capuchin Youth & Family Ministries is a unique opportunity for your child to reflect and grow in his/her faith. Your encouragement and example in this time of preparation demonstrates the importance of this Sacrament. This guide offers both information about the retreat and suggestions to continue the conversation around Confirmation with your child. We provide it as a resource to help you as you and your child work together to deepen this retreat experience and your relationship with Christ.



2013-2014 Retreat Team

Peace and all good,
The Staff of Capuchin Youth & Family Ministries

I. Description of Retreat

During the "Why Be Confirmed?" Confirmation retreat each student examines his/her relationship with God, and explores his/her attitude towards the sacrament of Confirmation. We then provide different tools necessary for the retreatant to take the next step in their journey in the Catholic faith.



Main activities

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

The retreat offers
four common

attitudes of teenagers preparing for Confirmation; these attitudes are embodied in four characters whom we introduced during the retreat. 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 researched my patron saint 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 help her to grow stronger in her faith
- 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. I think that Confirmation = Religious Education 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 and see the relevance of faith.



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.

II. Interact around the retreat with your child

Here are some possible touch points to engage your child in discussion about his/her retreat experience:

- I heard there were four ‘characters’ around whom the retreat was built. What do you remember about any of them? Was there one that reminded you most of you? (Parent, you might give some thought to which character you were most like when you made our confirmation, and then be ready to share with your child how YOU grew into a deeper faith.)
- At the end of a small group, we encouraged each retreatant to make some kind of resolution with regard to her/his faith and confirmation. Perhaps you could ask: What are you planning to do to prepare for your confirmation? How can I help in that?
- The “Holy Spirit Jeopardy” was a fun game activity, but it also was an opportunity for some catechesis in the faith, especially the 7 gifts of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps you could engage in conversation about the Gifts (Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Right Judgment, Fortitude, Courage, and Wonder and Awe.)
- Our “Tack Walk” activity was a simulation or metaphor of life, with a retreatant being led by another along a path with various obstacles (plastic golf ball markers). Themes we hope participants gather are the importance of choosing to whom we will listen, focusing on our chosen guide when things get tough or confusing, and discerning what kind of guide or influence we will be for others. A simple conversation starter: “Tell me about the Tack Walk.” “What did you learn from it?”



Follow up Suggestions

John Paul II’s Encyclical letter on family life, *Familiaris Consortio*, addresses the role of the Christian family in the modern world, stating:



“The family has the mission to guard, reveal, and communicate love, and this is a living reflection of and a real sharing in God’s love for humanity and the love of Christ the Lord for the church, his bride.”

We walked with your child on his/her faith journey for a brief time, while you as a parent/guardian are a constant figure in his/her faith journey. Thus, you are a significant influence and resource for your child to continue to grow in his/her faith and understanding of God. We know that facilitating a conversation about God with a teenager can be a challenge. We also know it can be most rewarding. Although this conversation may be difficult, it is a necessary and continual dialogue to have as your child grows and matures, because through it his/her faith will likewise grow and mature. Dr. Christian Smith describes many teenagers’ perspective of faith 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. Our hope and prayer is that you guide your child to discover the meaning and relevance of faith in Christ. Listed below are three ways you can support your child in his/her faith development:

- **Continuing the Conversation**

Surprisingly, many teenagers can and want to have this conversation with you! You can start small, asking about your child's retreat experience. Then, you can build on the conversation over time with questions like, "What do you like about being Catholic?" or "What do you think God wants from you?" etc. You can also talk to your child about why being Confirmed is important. A variety of questions can support your child to continue his/her reflection on faith, and better foster a relationship with Christ. Encourage your child to ask questions about faith, and assist them in finding the answers. Help your child to see such questions as a way of relating to or dialoguing with God. (See resources below)

- **Leading to Christ**

Within the Church: Your responsibility continues after your child receives Confirmation to encourage and challenge your child to grow in his/her faith. From driving your child to Mass on Sunday or praying with your child through the rhythms of family life, your involvement and encouragement can determine your child's experience of God and the Catholic Church. Emphasize the value of attending Mass, participating in the Sacraments, such as Reconciliation, and being involved in parish youth ministry and retreats.

Mission In the World: "You are the salt of the earth...You are the light of the world." (Mt 5:13-14) There are many places that your child's gifts and talents can make a difference in the world! Check out local organizations (e.g., soup kitchens, nursing homes, shelters, etc.) where your child can be salt and light. Service opportunities can provide teens with a unique and transformative experience of God as well as fulfilling and relevant experiences of their faith.

- **Providing the Example**

There is more truth to the songwriter/poets' words that we sometimes want to admit:



*Careful the things you say
Children will listen
Careful the things you do
Children will see and learn
Children may not obey, but children will listen
Children will look to you for which way to turn
To learn what to be...*

We hope you can hear the Good News in this. St. Francis of Assisi famously said, "Preach the Gospel at all times, and if necessary, use words." Your love and example as a parent can demonstrate to your child a faith observed and a faith lived. Model the Catholic faith and the charitable actions you wish to see in your child. Know that you are not alone in this journey and that it is worth the challenges encountered.

III. Further Information and Resources

John Paul II, in *Familiaris Consortio*, stated that:

“...Parents are through the witness of their lives the first heralds of the Gospel for their children. Furthermore, by praying with their children, by reading the Word of God with them and by introducing them deeply through Christian initiation into the Body of Christ...they become fully parents...”



Explanations of the faith always mean a lot more to a child coming from a parent and it is by the witness of a parent's faith that a child is directly nurtured. That is why starting or continuing the conversation about faith and confirmation with your child is so important. Below are some resources that are helpful tools for doing so. You can use them to be able to converse better with your child on given topics and can direct them to the links.

To start, an excellent 2-minute overview on things we can take pride in as Catholics:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vs6qZd_xP1w

(Catholics Come Home Video; catholicscomehome.org)

A helpful online resource for Catholic teenagers to learn more about their faith, including blogs, podcasts, etc.:

Here's a positive and engaging perspective on the human person and human sexuality for teenagers, based on John Paul II's Theology of the Body:

Theology of Her Body Videos (Jason Evert)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vLQtHHKWKws> (4 minutes)

Theology of His Body (Jason Evert)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sRTcod83PYI> (12 minutes)

A great group that produces engaging videos on different topics of faith. Click on the *Portfolio* tab on their home page to access past videos: <http://www.spiritjuicestudios.com/>

Also, here are more resources to serve the larger community:

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

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

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

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

Contact your Parish Youth Minister, Director of Religious Education, or Parish Office for your teenager to remain involved after Confirmation by finding opportunities in the church community (e.g., youth group, altar servers, service to the parish through the Religious Education Program, etc.)

Need more information? Feel free to contact us! Explore Capuchin Youth & Family Ministries:

<http://cyfm.org>

Make sure to look for more retreat and event options for your child to continue the experience!