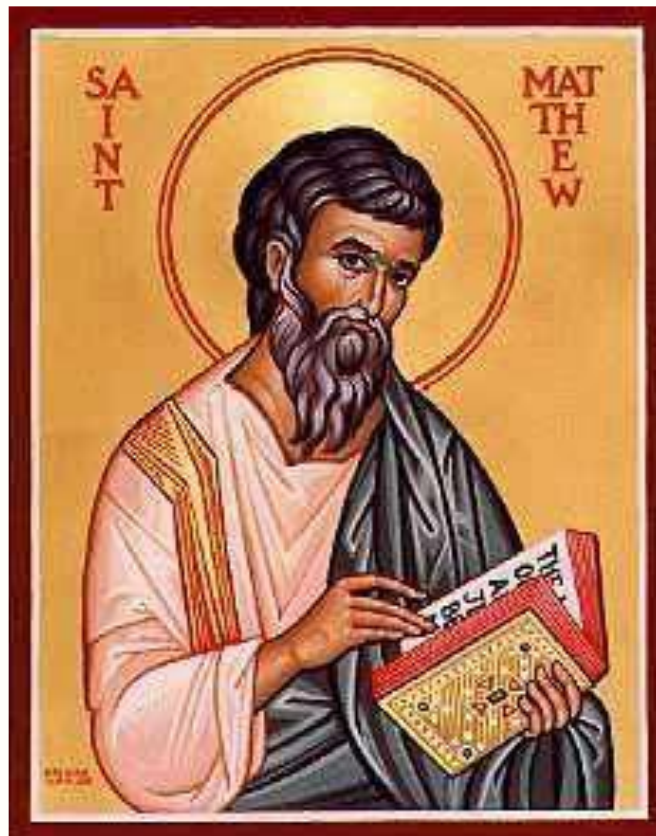


Confirmation Preparation

2023-2024 (year 2)

2024-2025 (year 1)



St. Matthew Parish
Faith Formation Office
Glendale Heights, IL

630-469-6300 x318

faithformation@stmatthewchurch.org

Revised October 3, 2023

Dear St. Matthew Parish Confirmandi,

October 2023

Today marks an important step for you – our Confirmation Candidates – whether you are in your first year, just beginning your Confirmation preparation, or in your second year, preparing to receive Confirmation in September 2024. At St. Matthew, you will prepare for and receive the Sacrament of Confirmation as a parish family, which means that both St. Matthew Parish School students and St. Matthew Faith Formation students will prepare for and receive the Sacrament of Confirmation together. We come together as an inclusive parish community that is culturally diverse, but that shares one common goal of preparing you to go out into the world as disciples of Jesus Christ to live out and share our Catholic faith.

When you receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, it does not mean that you are “done” learning about your faith. It does not mean you are “an adult in the Faith”. Confirmation is **NOT** graduation from “church school”. **Confirmation is a beginning** rather than the end. It’s true that Confirmation completes the process of your initiation into the Catholic Church that began when you were Baptized. However, ALL of us, including you, your parents, and your teachers/catechists, are “unfinished Christians” throughout our whole lives! Growing in knowledge of our Catholic faith, developing an ever-closer relationship with God, and living out our faith in our daily lives is a life-long endeavor! Confirmation means you are ready to go on mission, continuing the work that Jesus Christ began almost 2,000 years ago!

On the day of your Confirmation, you will be “marked for Christ” with an indelible (permanent) mark – kind of like a brand or an invisible tattoo. Long after the Holy Chrism Oil that the bishop will use to make the sign of the cross on your forehead washes away, you will still be “marked for Jesus Christ”, consecrated into God’s service for the rest of your life! Once you are sealed with the Holy Chrism Oil, you will be enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit to help you share more completely in the mission of Jesus Christ. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) says, “By this anointing the Confirmand receives the ‘mark,’ the seal of the Holy Spirit” (CCC 1295). “This seal of the Holy Spirit **marks our total belonging to Christ, our enrollment in His service FOR EVER**, as well as the promise of divine protection in the great eschatological trial [when Jesus returns to judge us at the end of time]” (CCC 1296, emphasis and explanation added).

So, let’s get going! Let’s all take part in building the Kingdom of God on earth by being the face of Jesus to others, seeing the face of Jesus in others, and deepening our relationship with God so that we can go out into the world, following Jesus’ example and His Greatest Commandment: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37-39).

With the abundant love of Jesus Christ,

Fr. Gregor Gorsic
Pastor of St. Matthew Parish

Mrs. Ann Toutant
Principal of St. Matthew School

Ms. Christine Balaty
Director of Faith Formation

What Is Confirmation? What Is It for?

As you choose to prepare to complete the grace given to you by God at your Baptism, it is important to know what Confirmation is and why you need it. Confirmation and Baptism are two of the three “Sacraments of Initiation” into the Catholic Church. The third is the Eucharist, which some of you will also receive for the first time at Confirmation. When you have received all three of these Sacraments, you will be fully initiated into the Catholic Church.

You probably don’t remember because you were a baby or small child, but you were anointed with the Oil of the Catechumens just before the priest or deacon poured the waters of Baptism on you to wash away the Original Sin we inherited from our first parents, Adam and Eve. This anointing was used to help you to ward off evil, avoid temptation and possess the faith necessary to carry the cross of Christ throughout life. Since you were a baby or a small child, your parents made your Baptismal promises for you. At Confirmation, you will make these promises yourself

Following your Baptism with water, but before you received the white garment signaling that you had been washed clean of Original Sin, the priest or deacon also traced the sign of the cross with Holy Chrism Oil on the crown of your head. Holy Chrism Oil is mixed with balsam. The oil symbolizes strength, and the fragrant balsam represents the “aroma of Christ” (2 Cor 2:15).

When the bishop anoints you with Holy Chrism oil, this action signifies that you are receiving the gifts of the Holy Spirit as well as an indelible (permanent) mark that claims you as belonging to Jesus Christ. The Holy Chrism Oil is used to consecrate someone to God’s service. Once you are sealed with the Holy Chrism Oil, you will be enriched with the special strength of the Holy Spirit to help you share more completely in the mission of Jesus Christ.

When you are permanently marked with the Holy Chrism Oil for Jesus Christ, you are choosing to be true disciples and witnesses of Jesus Christ by spreading and defending the Catholic Faith through your words and actions. The gifts you receive from the Holy Spirit will help you to accomplish Jesus’ mission – to help to build the Kingdom of God on earth! To go out into the world as the face, hands, and feet of Jesus, called to serve those whom we meet along the way, even when it is difficult. Through the gifts of the Holy Spirit, you will be guided to do the will of God, which will not always be easy. Call on the Holy Spirit often to help you to know and do the will of God throughout your life. Ask the Holy Spirit for the help and guidance you need to make choices in life that will lead you to knowing and doing God’s Will for you.

Jesus himself has called you to love God and to love others through your love of and service for others. An acronym that puts the priorities in our lives in proper order is the word **JOY**:

Jesus first, then Others, and lastly, Yourself.

That is how we find true joy and fulfillment in life – by living in right relationship with the Lord and other people.

Jesus Himself was a servant to others; He showed us how we can be one, too:

“Jesus rose from supper and took off His outer garments. He took a towel and tied it around His waist. Then He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and dry them with the towel around His waist... When He had washed their feet and put His garments back on and reclined at table again, He said to them, ‘Do you realize what I have done for you? You call Me ‘teacher’ and ‘master, and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do... If you understand this, blessed are you if you do it” (John 13:4-5, 12-15, 17).

Catholics are reminded that we are sent forth on mission every time the priest or deacon gives the “final dismissal” at Mass! The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 1332) explains that “the liturgy in which the mystery of salvation is accomplished concludes with the sending forth (mission) of the faithful [YOU!], so that they may fulfill God’s will in their daily lives.” As Confirmed Catholic Christians, we share in the mission of Jesus Christ by bringing His message to the world! How? By our words and actions! One choice for the final dismissal prayer tells us to, “Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.” Another dismissal prayer that we no longer use, but sums up our mission is “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.” YES! And we love and serve the Lord when we serve others! At the Final Judgment at the end of time, Jesus will tell those who were servants to others:

“Come, you who are blessed by My Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer Him and say, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?’ And the king [Jesus] will say to them in reply, ‘Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine [other people], you did for Me” (Matthew 25:34b-40)

And to those who were not servants to others during their earthly lives:

“He will answer them, ‘Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones [other people in need], you did not do for Me.’ And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life” (Matthew 25: 45-46)

See the face of Jesus in the people you encounter every day, and be the face of Jesus to others. Remember, it's not about you! It's about serving others with love. That's what Jesus did, and that's what He wants you to do, too!

Most importantly, know that your Confirmation is not an end, but rather **a new beginning of life-long growth in living out your Catholic faith.** In the words of Dr. Scott Hahn, a Catholic theologian, “We are all unfinished Christians.” Keep growing in your understanding of the lessons and example that Jesus gave in the Gospel! Keep looking for opportunities to serve and grow in your faith throughout your whole life. If you do that, you will come to the end of your life and hear Jesus tell you:

“Well done, my good and faithful servant. Come share your master’s joy” (Mt 25:21)

Components of Confirmation Preparation

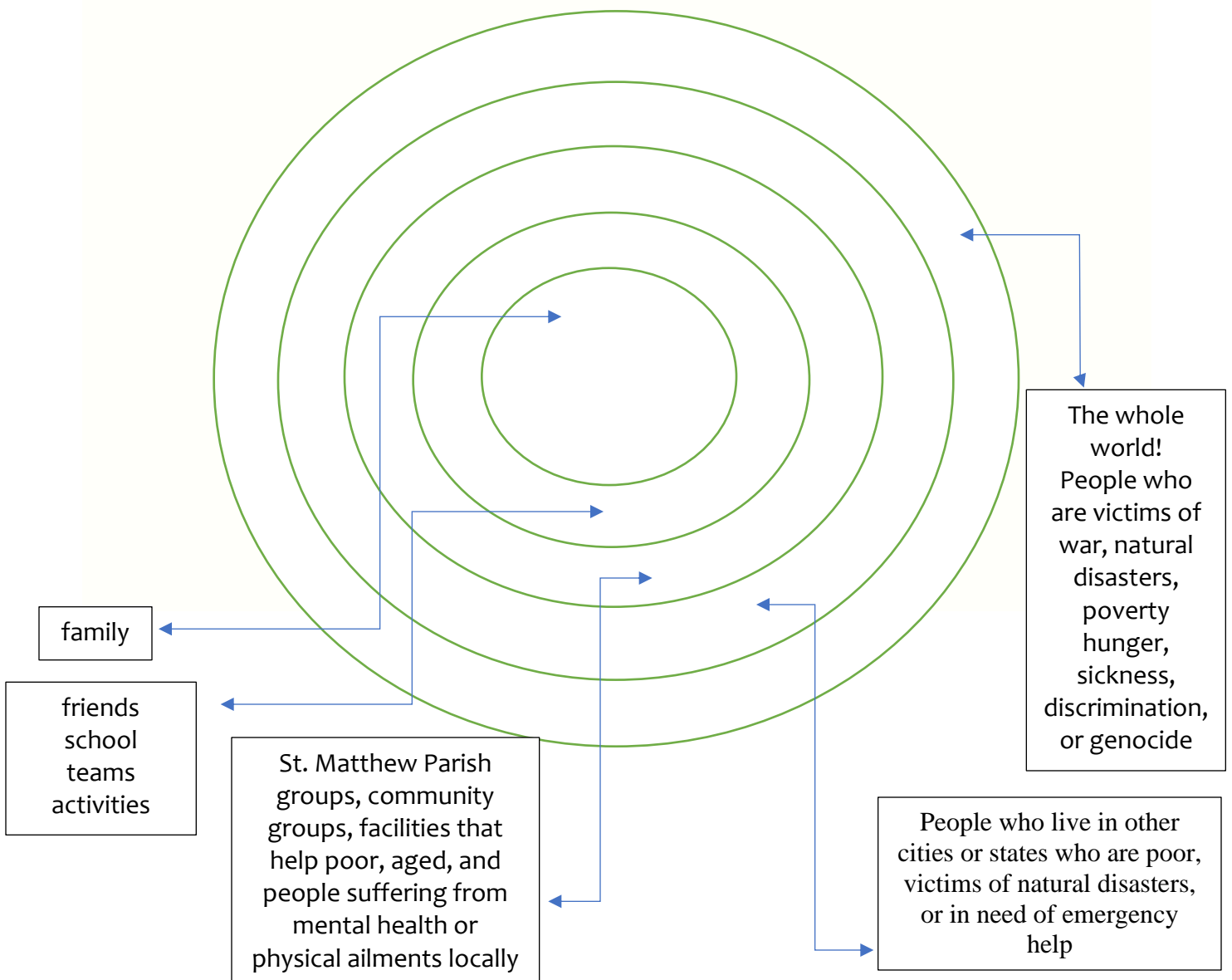
The service requirement (Called “Reach out to our Neighbors”) for Confirmation is included in the central portion of your Confirmation folder. Here is an overview:

“I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35)

*“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?”
Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord, your God,
with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.
This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it:
You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Matthew 36-39)*

So... who is my neighbor? Whom should I love?

Everyone!!!



Let's "Reach out to our Neighbors"!!!

What Can We Do?

Even though it is important to help your family with household chores, babysitting, and/or helping grandparents and/or other family members, these are things we should normally do as part of a family. Also, we help friends because we know and like them. That is a good thing, too, but we want to reach out even further.

The goal of "Reach Out to Neighbors" is to reach out to people beyond our homes and families, schools, teams, or regular clubs and activities. Look at the three outer-most rings of the "Who Is my Neighbor?" diagram. But, where and how do we find these people? While your parent may need to drive you or accompany you, **YOU** should be the person making the phone call or email to contact groups or facilities to see if they need help and whether you are of an age that can participate in their service projects (sometimes you have to be 18 years old or older or accompanied by an adult).

Also, try to give of yourself to help others in new and different ways! Try to have a variety of activities included as you "Reach Out to Neighbors"! **Here are SOME ideas, but not the only ideas.** Some of these groups and organizations book volunteers weeks or even months in advance, so don't wait until the week your hours of service to others is due! Start thinking and planning right away!

For example, as Thanksgiving and Christmas are coming, up, think about helping a group put together boxes of food for a holiday dinner that some people couldn't otherwise afford. Or gather Christmas toys for kids in a hospital (make sure to check with the hospital or other organization first to see what their rules and requirements are). How about helping a senior living center at mealtimes or social time, playing games or reading to them, or singing Christmas Carols! How about Valentine's Day? Valentines for Vets? Going to visit a VA facility to visit with some vets; they love to tell their stories!!! Or... create your own drive to gather items people might need... a coat drive as it gets colder or items needed by a women's center like Waterleaf. The opportunities are endless when we start brainstorming about people in need. Here are some more examples, but, again, you are not limited to these ideas.

- Contact the St. Matthew St. Vincent de Paul Society, which serves the needy, to see how you could get involved (630-469-6300 x302). They might need help gathering donated food or other items, boxing up Thanksgiving and Christmas food items for holiday meals and helping to put them in cars on the day they are given out
- Feed My Starving Children – a great family project! Again, boxing up food items for those in need. Visit www.fmsc.org This is one that you have to call and book your time very early!
- Phil's Friends – a local organization providing Christ-centered support and hope to those affected by cancer. Visit www.philsfriends.org
- Sign up with a group to make dinner for and visit with families at Ronald McDonald House at Central DuPage Hospital. Go to www.rmhc.org to find out what opportunities exist.
- Help at an animal shelter
- Go to www.volunteermatch.org and see what opportunities exist that you might be interested in and that are safe for teens to do.
- How about the Glen Ellyn Food Pantry? www.glenellynfoodpantry.org

- Check out www.luriechildren.org to see what volunteer opportunities they have... especially around Hannukah and Christmas! ... or see if you can help with “Toys for Tots”
- Google “service projects near Glendale Heights” and see what comes up! Parents, help your teen find an opportunity that is safe for him/her to do. Sometimes you must be 18 or older to participate.
- Supporting a facility that serves P.A.D.S. (Public Action to Deliver Shelter) like providing food for a meal. This can be done in a variety of ways. If you are interested in this opportunity, please contact DuPage PADS (parents probably need to accompany you.)
- Participate in ministries at Sunday Mass such as being an altar server, usher, greeter, or handing out bulletins after Mass, etc. With the pastor’s approval you may also serve in roles such as lector and altar server.

When planning your service, please consider a variety of activities to propose to your teacher/catechist **and get approval first** (see log sheet). Also, when each project is complete, be sure to write a reflection on the impact the experience had on you by completing the back page of the log. Please use the log sheet provided to track these activities, and **write a reflection for EACH service project you did to “Reach Out to Others”**.



“Reach Out to Others” Service Requirements

“Reach Out to Others” hours –Each candidate for confirmation is expected to complete service hours throughout the year. Projects must be pre-approved by your teacher or catechist. Each “Reach Out to Others” activity must be logged on the log sheet in the center of your folder and include a reflection on the back. There is a log to record service activities and reflections in the center section of your folder.

7th Grade / 1st Year Confirmation Candidates

must complete **10 hours** of “Reach Out to Others” service individually or as a group/family by
Sunday, April 14, 2024 – Sunday Faith Formation students – turn in to your catechist
Monday, April 15, 2024 – St. Matthew School students – turn in to your teacher

8th Grade / 2nd Year Confirmation Candidates

must complete **15 hours** of “Reach Out to Others” service individually or as a group/family by
Wednesday, April 17, 2024 – Sunday Faith Formation students – turn in to your catechist
Monday, April 15, 2024 – St. Matthew School students – turn in to your teacher

Decision Point is the first Confirmation program specifically developed to engage young Catholics in a meaningful conversation about Catholicism. It teaches and inspires teens to respond to God's grace.

The most significant finding of Dynamic Catholic's research over five years shows that it is not enough to just saturate young Catholics with information about their faith. The old way is not working; today 85% of young Catholics stop practicing their faith within 10 years of their Confirmation.

A different approach is necessary. Our young people need to find deeply personal answers to their deeply personal questions. The discussions they engage in around the videos and journaling they do within the *Decision Point* Confirmation program helps them to find these answers. Our Confirmandi will engage in conversations that we pray will lead to a lifetime commitment to their faith. This is a critical time in our young peoples' lives. *Decision Point* brings to life the teachings of Jesus Christ in their lives. Our teens need to hear the Gospel in a way that is new, interesting, and relevant to them. We need to meet them where they are and help them find where God is calling them.

This kind of conversion does not happen with a teacher or catechist telling them about their faith. The conversations that happen within the *Decision Point* program helps teens to make their own choice to belong to Christ and His Church. God chooses us, but our young people, through their God-given free will, need to come to a point where they choose God. We want to inspire them to respond and cooperate with God's grace in their daily lives long after they have received the Sacrament of Confirmation.

The following are the expectations of the young people who are utilizing the the *Decision Point* program to prepare for Confirmation, whether it is in the classrooms of St. Matthew School or through our St. Matthew Faith Formation program:

- **Participation in Group Discussion** – A central tenant of the *Decision Point* program. To get the most out of their time, they must put in some effort to participate in discussions. You get what you give. If our teens do not try to enter into the discussion, they will not get the most out of these sessions.
- **Journaling: thoughtfully answering discussion questions and writing their thoughts on the pages provided** – Each student will receive a *Decision Point* journal. For each video, there are questions to reflect on, which may also be the topic of group discussion. There is also a page for each video entitled "My Thoughts". This process of conversion of our young people cannot take place unless they take some time to think, to digest what they have seen and heard, to ask their own questions, and to jot down their thoughts. We expect each teen to actually USE the journal to help foster their personal decision to choose to be Catholic – to live out their faith.



8th Grade / Year 2 Confirmation Requirements

In addition to “Reach Out to Others” service hours, Confirmandi (Confirmation Candidates) in their 2nd year of Confirmation preparation will also be required to complete the following:

- **Confirmation Interviews:** Confirmandi will be individually scheduled by the Faith Formation Office to participate in short 10-15 minute interviews with clergy and the Director of Faith Formation on Tuesday, May 7, 2024 and Tuesday, May 14, 2024. These will be conversations will be about topics ranging from why they chose their patron saint and sponsor to how they plan to live out their faith more fully after Confirmation. Further information will be communicated via email in **April 2024** about how to sign up online for interviews.
- **Confirmation Retreat:** All 8th grade / 2nd year Faith Formation Confirmandi are required to attend our St. Matthew Confirmation retreat on **September 7, 2024**. The cost of the retreat will be **\$30 per participant** (which will include a snack, pizza dinner for him/her, his/her sponsor, and your family, and the Confirmation gown rental fee). We will contact you via email closer to the date for a count of how many people will be attending the pizza dinner from your family. Family members and sponsors are invited to come to Confession and Mass in the church as well as the pizza dinner in Hurley Hall. ***NOTE* Please make sure that your son/daughter has eaten lunch before attending the retreat.**

Confirmandi will attend the retreat individually from 12:00 noon – 3:45 PM. The retreat portion of the day will be followed by Confession, 5 PM Mass, 6 PM family and sponsor pizza dinner, and 7:00 PM – 8:30 PM Confirmation rehearsal in the church with Confirmation Candidates **AND Sponsors**. **Please make sure that Sponsors will be able to attend the rehearsal from 7:00 – 8:30 PM in the church by notifying them in advance of this date.**

Please complete the parish retreat permission form (blue form in folder). Please be sure that these permission forms along with \$30 payment (cash or check made out to St. Matthew Parish) for the retreat are **turned in to the Faith Formation Office in the Tasker Parish Office by Monday, August 19, 2024.**

- **Confirmation Patron Saint/Confirmation Name Report:** Confirmandi will choose a patron saint, whose name they will take as their Confirmation name at their Confirmation. They can choose one of their Baptismal names or a saint that they connect with or is meaningful to them in some way. Students must complete the “Saint Report” assignment on the so-named page in the center of your Confirmation folder.
- **Additional Paperwork Completion:** **The following are due to the Faith Formation Office on Friday, November 3, 2023:**
 - A copy of your child’s baptismal certificate (if not already on file in the Faith Formation Office)
 - The Sacramental Profile Sheet (yellow form in folder)
 - Confirmation Sponsor Form (white form in folder)



Choosing a Sponsor for Confirmation

When those who were Baptized Catholic as infants are Confirmed, they each choose a sponsor for Confirmation. Ideally, the Baptismal godparent returns as the Confirmation sponsor (Canon 893/2). This practice indicates that the godparent's work continues throughout life, and it unites the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. However, a Confirmation candidate can choose a different person as his/her Confirmation sponsor if there is a person who has had a particularly positive impact on the candidate's growth in faith and love of others over the years and is a good example of someone who lives their Catholic faith.

A sponsor accompanies a candidate seeking Confirmation on his/her faith journey, and ultimately full initiation into the Catholic Church. Sponsors are people who have known the Confirmation candidate for a period of years and have been a role model of the Catholic Faith for him/her. "If someone has had the principal part in guiding or preparing the candidate, he or she should be the sponsor" (RCIA 483).

Sponsors also stand as witnesses to a Confirmation candidate's moral character, faith, and intention to continue to grow in faith and love of God and neighbor. "It is for the sponsor to see that the Confirmed person acts as a true witness to Christ and faithfully fulfills the obligations connected with the Sacrament." (Canon 892) It is the responsibility of the Confirmation sponsor to continue to guide and support the Confirmand throughout his/her life.

How do I discern (choose) a sponsor?

Each candidate preparing for Confirmation will be asked to choose a Confirmation Sponsor. Being a Confirmation Sponsor is not just an honor given to a good friend or relative. A Confirmation sponsor actively practices his/her Catholic faith, exemplified by:

- having received the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist
- being a registered parishioner at a Catholic Church
- attending Sunday Mass weekly
- regularly receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- actively participating in the life of his/her Catholic parish (groups, ministries, devotional worship outside of Mass)
- contributing member of his/her Catholic parish (through weekly offertory)
- if married, being married in the Catholic Church
 - If not married in the Catholic Church, may not be living with or sexually involved with someone outside of marriage in the Catholic Church, even if he/she is married civilly. This is considered adultery.
 - If divorced, must have an annulment through the Catholic Church in order to date or marry again; failure to do so is considered adultery.
- Shows interest in the candidate and in the program of preparation for Confirmation
- Helps the parents and candidate discern his/her readiness and commitment to this Sacrament.
- Spends some time with the candidate prior to and following the celebration of the Sacrament. The sponsor must be willing to serve as a kind of spiritual mentor, both during the Confirmation preparation process and beyond.

Additional requirements to be a sponsor:

- Be 16 years of age
- May not be the parent, adoptive parent, or step-parent of the candidate.

SPONSOR DISCERNMENT PROCESS

1. With your parents, in prayer, list the names of possible sponsors.
2. Consider each person carefully, using the following as a guide:
 - Does he/she meet the above requirements?
 - Does he/she live close enough to meet with, to pray with, to discuss, to discern with me? To do service with me?
 - Is he/she able to attend the required meeting/rehearsal on Saturday, September 7, 2024? And Confirmation Mass (**TBD – on or around** Friday, September 21, 2024, the Feast of St. Matthew)?
 - Does he/she live the Catholic way of life as described above? Of worship? Of service?
 - Is he/she mature enough to guide and challenge me to be a real Catholic Christian?
 - Can I relate well to him/her so that we can pray and discuss our faith together?

When the discernment process is complete, students will give the selected sponsor a *Sponsor Certificate of Eligibility* form that he/she will bring to the Catholic parish where his/she is a registered parishioner, and if necessary, attach either a copy of their Confirmation Certificate, Catholic Church Marriage Certificate, or other proof they are a fully initiated Catholic. **It is the prospective sponsor's responsibility to complete this task so please remind them that each form must be signed by a parish priest as well as being stamped with the parish seal. Completed sponsor forms are due November 3, 2023.**

It is worth noting again that it is desirable that **a godparent (only one** of the candidate's sponsors at Baptism) also be the sponsor for Confirmation since the responsibilities undertaken by the sponsor at Confirmation are a continuation and development of the sponsor's promises made at the candidate's Baptism. (Canon 693 Art. 2) However this is not mandatory and someone other than a Baptismal Sponsor may be chosen.