

Confirmation Program 2009-2010

August 2009

Dear Parents,

As we prepare this year's ninth grade class for confirmation I wanted to outline the schedule and requirements for class once again and also let you know our class schedules and retreat options for the coming fall and spring. The confirmation date will be set by the diocesan office sometime before Christmas and I will pass that information along as soon as I have it. Confirmation will be held in March, April, or May. The obligations for confirmation, as outlined in the packet you received in the spring and which are available on the parish website, are: mass attendance, attending a retreat, 20 service hours, participation in youth group once a month, attending confirmation classes, confirmation exam in February, and confirmation name saint paper. Your child must also choose a confirmation sponsor who is a practicing catholic and who must provide a 'sponsor certificate' from their home parish to the Religious Education office for our official records. On October 7th I ask you to arrive to our first class with your child at 6:30pm for a brief parent meeting to go over all of the details for the coming year.

Mass requirement- All candidates must attend mass at least twice per month and sign into the binders provided and clearly labeled "Confirmation Class Mass Sign- in Book" There will be two locations for these binders- in the foyer- on the shelf next to the statue of Mary, and in the Church Hall, on the table next to the book rack. Please call me if you cannot find these binders. This sign in begins in October.

Retreat- For those who did not attend Steubenville East as their confirmation retreat option, we will have two weekend retreat options this fall with the Youth 2000 Retreat program. See details at www.youth2000ny.com or contact me directly for details on this retreat. The weekends for this retreat are September 18-20th at St. Matthew's Parish in Dix Hills, NY, or November 13-15 at St. James Parish in Carmel, NY. Please contact me as soon as possible for forms and sign-up for these retreats as I need to make group transportation and chaperone arrangements. The cost of this retreat is \$45. If either of these retreat weekends do not work for you, Fr. Michael is allowing for either the Parish Mission or the Lenten Program here at St. Mary's to be substituted for the overnight, but the entire program, all four sessions, MUST be attended. The dates for the Parish mission are: October 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th, and 29th, times to be determined. The dates for the Lenten Program are: Feb. 25th, March 4th, 11th, 18th: times to be determined.

Service hours- Service hour forms will be available during class times or at any time I can email it to you just let me know that you need one. Service hour and saint name paper are due no later than March 3rd, our final class date.

Classes- Classes for Confirmation will be held once a month on Wednesday evenings from 7-8pm beginning in October. These classes are mandatory as there are only 6 of them for the entire year. Absences must be made up one on one with me. Please do not be absent from classes except in cases of emergency, as this will make my schedule very difficult. Dates for classes are October 7th, November 4th, December 2nd, January 6th, February 3rd, and March 3rd. On October 7th I ask you to arrive to our first class with your child at 6:30pm for a brief parent meeting to go over all of the details for the coming year.

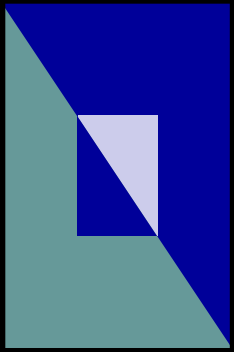
Youth group- During our first class you will receive a youth ministry schedule of events and Sunday night activities, of which your child must choose one per month in which to participate. Guidelines for choosing a sponsor will also be provided as well a copy of the exam questions and answers for February. I know all of this can seem overwhelming, but it will be a journey of spiritual growth and responsibility that will foster a great faith! Please know I will be right here, every step of the way to help navigate this process. If you have any problems at all with anything, that is what I am here for, and we will make it to the beautiful sacramental mass together! Contact me anytime, with anything you might need or anything I may have missed.

Peace in Christ,

Andrea Tuthill, Director of Religious Education and Youth Ministry

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Confirmation Requirements

These following are the Roman Catholic Church and the Diocese of Norwich requirements of all confirmation candidates.

- **Sponsor Certificate**– All confirmandi must have a sponsor who is a practicing catholic, as verified by a sponsor certificate. At St. Mary’s, sponsor certificates are required for program enrollment.
- **Confirmation Retreat**– All confirmandi must attend a retreat. At St. Mary’s we require this to be a weekend retreat.
- **Service hours**– All confirmandi must complete service hours. At St. Mary’s we require 20 hours over service over the course of 6th through 9th grade years.
- **All candidates must be practicing Catholics.** St. Mary’s has outlined this with 7 guidelines.

Please see enclosed information for details on the above requirements. Confirmation will be held in the Spring of 2010. The date will be available in November of 2009, when it is assigned by the Bishop’s Office. Enrollment in Confirmation is automatic through your Religious Ed. enrollment and participation in the 8th grade year.

Sponsors

Preparing for confirmation is a great experience, and hopefully you've thought a lot about what this sacrament means, and how the Holy Spirit will affect your life.

You'll be required to have a sponsor—someone who will guide you and share the story of faith with you. A good sponsor will make this process a little easier and even more fun.

Some guidelines for choosing a sponsor:

1. The choice of your sponsor is a very important aspect of your preparation for Confirmation. You are encouraged to select one of your godparents as your sponsor because they will continue the godparents' role of helping you fulfill your baptismal promises. If your godparents live too far away to participate in the confirmation process, please select a nearby relative or a friend. Please discuss your sponsor choice with your parents. Sponsors must be at least 16 years old.
2. The sponsor must be **baptized, confirmed, and a practicing Catholic**. This is verified by the receipt of a "**Sponsor Certificate**" that they obtain from their own parish and must be turned into the Religious Education Office.
3. Parents are not eligible to be sponsors for their own child. However, parents should and are encouraged to stand in for the sponsor in cases where they cannot be present for confirmation activities.
4. The sponsor chosen will serve as your mentor and witness during the next year as you prepare for confirmation. The role of your sponsor is to support you in the process of becoming an active member of the church.

Confirmation Retreat

“Retreat! Retreat!” In battle, that can be a bad thing. In the life of a Christian it can and should be a beautiful thing. Retreating away from the secular world, from the noise of society, and from our own busy and hectic schedules, allows us to listen to God and spend quality time with Him. Retreats are like a “God vacation”. It is important for teens, especially in today’s world, to be able to experience God’s presence and love. Through a retreat where the outside influences, whether good or bad, can distract us from our relationship with God are removed, teens are more able to develop their own identity in Christ. Having an entire weekend that is television, ipod, cell phone, and facebook free is an amazing way to shock the system of today’s average teen. Add encountering Christ to that mix, and we have a recipe for our confirmation retreat! This is a crucial part of preparing the candidates for Confirmation through searching out their own relationship with God. Our Confirmation program provides three chaperoned group options for retreat opportunities. St. Mary’s retreat options include the Steubenville East Conference, or a Youth 2000 Retreat.

Steubenville conferences are nationally known for their lively speakers, sacrament centered activities, lively music, and powerful experiences of participants. St. Mary’s will be attending this retreat at The University of Rhode Island Campus for the 10th straight year. Average attendance is between 3300-3700 people. We will attend this year’s Steubenville Conference on July 24-26. The cost of this retreat is \$220. www.steubenvilleeast.org

Our second option is a Youth 2000 Retreat. Youth 2000 is an international retreat ministry for Catholic youth. These retreats run Friday to Sunday and include music, speakers, witness talks, recreation, small group discussions, mass, confession and adoration. The weekends are hosted and led by the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal. They are usually held at parishes in the New York area. The date for this retreat is September 18-20 at St. Matthew’s in Dix Hills, NY and on November 13-15 at St. James in Carmel, NY. The cost of this retreat is \$35. I have been attending and helping to run Youth 2000 retreats since November of 2000, they are a wonderful and powerful experience of the faith. You can find out more about this retreat at www.youth2000ny.com. The cost of the Youth 2000 retreats are \$70.

If these options do not seem viable, please feel free to call me and set up a time to meet about alternatives for your child. I am trying to find dynamic and interesting retreats that will reach the kids, while still having something to fit every budget. Also please know that if you are uncomfortable with your child being gone overnight, you are more than welcome to come along as a chaperone, we always need more help! The experience of being in a new environment and interacting with Catholic youth from other parishes is an integral and essential part of the retreat experience.

Service Hours

Service is an amazing way to give back to the community. Through this we show how God is working in our lives. By serving others as Jesus did, we spread His gospel through our selfless actions for others. St. Francis of Assisi has a famous quote, “Preach the gospel at all times, use words when necessary.” It is through the way we live our lives and the actions we display to others that our character as Christians becomes alive within us. This is why we serve.

Twenty Hours of service are required over the three year period from 6th through 8th grades. Outside service hours and ideas are more than welcome and encouraged. However we do need help here at home as well! Options for service here at St. Mary’s are: the Mardi Gras, Vacation Bible School, the Macaroni Monster Bash, the Craft Fairs (Summer and Christmas), Children’s Liturgy of the Word, Catechist’s aide, Altar serving and lectoring, and the parish library. Candidates will be able to sign up for these service opportunities during fall classes. If your child has served at these events in the past and have not been keeping track, please go over these items with them and write them in on the forms, which will be provided in class and each candidate must have their service hours signed by the adult supervising the activity.

Practicing Your Faith

Being a “practicing” catholic is expected of all those receiving sacraments in the Catholic Church. This term “practicing” may seem strange. Practice is usually something we associate with sports or instruments, not necessarily religion. But if we think about it, to get better at something, even being a Christian, we must live it everyday. We wouldn’t expect to be able to be playing in the big game on a team if we never went to practice and immersed ourselves in the season and the team. Our faith can be like this in a lot of ways, the more we attend and participate in the life of the church, the more we “practice”, the more real it becomes in our lives and the choices we make. In preparing to receive the Holy Spirit, these candidates are getting ready for the biggest “game” in their lives to this point. It is our job as a church and your job as a parent, to make sure they are ready for it! At St. Mary’s we will prepare them in the following ways:

- **1. We require mass attendance at least twice per month**, weekly mass attendance is strongly encouraged and is a precept of the Catholic faith. This is THE most important part of your preparation. There will be a sign-in book in the church vestibule beginning in September during weekend masses. If you miss your mass attendance without any given reason, you will not be able to make confirmation. If you attend mass elsewhere, we require you to bring back a bulletin from the parish where you attended.
- **2.** We follow a tradition in the church of choosing a confirmation name. This name signifies a new identity in the family of God, and a choice by the candidate to follow holy examples and role models. A two– page saint name report is required on the name your child chooses. This report is due in January 2010.
- **3.** We have a confirmation exam in January, a few months prior to confirmation. 75% is a passing grade. The exam is scheduled in January and may be taken again in February and/or March if necessary. The questions and the answers will be given to your children in September. **NO ONE FAILS.** Please do not let the exam deter anyone. The exam is merely in place to assure that we are all prepared.
- **4.** There will be a Confirmation class on the first Wednesday evening each month, from 6:30-7:30. This will begin on Oct. 7th, 2009.
- **5.** Once a month candidates will attend “XLT” adoration nights of prayer with guest speakers.
- **6.** Catechism for the confirmation class will also encompass attending Life Night activities once per month, beginning in September 2009. Life Nights will be held 3-4 times each month, from 6:30-8:00pm on Sunday evenings. Your child must choose one to attend.
- **7.** The Confirmation Date will be assigned by the Diocesan Office in November of 2009 for the Spring of 2010.

Besides attending mass, the time commitment for Confirmation is three times per month, once for XLT - once for a chosen LIFE NIGHT-