

St. Rita Catholic Parish

Confirmation Preparation Program

Expectations and Overview

Welcome to St. Rita Catholic Parish's Confirmation Preparation Process! We congratulate you on your decision to discover more about God, as revealed through Jesus and Scripture, Faith, The Church and ultimately, yourself in an effort to make a responsible choice about the sacrament of Confirmation. We hope that the information that follows answers any questions you may have.

The Church's understanding and practice of the sacrament of Confirmation has undergone radical changes in the last two decades, resulting in the recovery of catechumen model of initiation, the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. When applied to the preparation of youth, we realize that it must be understood in a much larger context than religious education alone. We can no longer be satisfied with "just the facts." Young people need and deserve far more than that, and the church of today is mandated to give them more. In addition, moving the faith connection from the head (in knowledge) to their heart (in encountering) is where it truly becomes solidified.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us, "Confirmation should strive to awaken a sense of belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ, the universal Church as well as the parish community. The latter (parish community) bears a special responsibility for the preparation of the confirmands."#1309

We look forward to the exciting months ahead as a time of growth not only for the Confirmation candidates but for the entire faith community. **It is imperative that candidates and their families participate in, as best as they are able, our Sunday Mass.** If it is your intention to be fully initiated in the Catholic Church, this includes our life and worship as a parish community. Most Confirmation information will be transmitted through the bulletin, on our website, as well as through periodic electronic newsletters (Evangelus).

AGE:

St. Rita Catholic Parish allows any child **who is entering the 7th grade** to begin preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation. It is a two-year program with the celebration of the Mass of Confirmation in the Fall of their 3rd year (9th grade).

REQUEST FOR PREPARATION:

All youth who would like to begin preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation must submit a "**Request for Preparation**" form.

MENTORING

All confirmation candidates, with the help of their parents, are asked to **choose a mentor** (a.k.a. sponsor), an adult or confirmed older teen, whom you would consider to be a role model as a member of a Catholic Christian community. Some qualities to look for in making your choice would be an adult...

1. ...who would take a personal interest in you, the candidate.
2. ... whose beliefs, values, behavior, accomplishments and style of life reflect his/her Catholic faith, a faith life and lifestyle the candidate would like to adopt in his/her own life.
3. ... who actively practices their faith according to the precepts of the Catholic Church
4. ... who is continuing to search and grow in his/her relationship with God and in his/her faith.
5. ... who is able to let the young person know that questions, doubt, and confusion as well as joy, grace and discovery are normal outcomes of maturing faith.
6. ... who will provide an open ear to the youth.

7. ... who has the time and desire to fulfill the role of mentor.
8. ... who is easily accessible and available for joint projects and for the Confirmation Mass
9. ... who is NOT a legal parent/guardian (as noted in Rite of Confirmation RC#5)

The student and mentor will meet, beginning in January of the student's 8th grade year, once every four to six weeks to discuss a specific topic outlined in a **Confirmation Preparation Packet** (there are 4 packets total). The packets are designed to help foster a discussion on one of four topics, heroes, sin, the great commission, and readiness to receive the sacrament. Your packet will include three to four pages of reading material and some reflection questions to be completed in advance AND after your mentor meeting. Packets should be completed and turned in before the next packet is given. Please stay on top of the due dates, you do not want to fall behind!

There are certain expectations for all of our candidates that are outlined below. ***Please note them and plan for them accordingly.*** The flexibility of the program can be wonderful but does put the responsibility upon the student to complete all expectations BY the deadline. With our Confirmation Mass happening in mid-October you DON'T want to be scrambling in September and early October of the third year to complete things. Your freshmen year of High School is a big year, I recommend having things done before school starts so you aren't overwhelmed or forget to turn something in.

RETREAT

All confirmation candidates must attend a retreat, as a requirement of the Diocese of Lansing. Our youth ministry team has prepared a retreat especially for our confirmation candidates which will be held in the Fall of their 8th grade year (we hope). This will day-long retreat experience will expose our candidates to a more in-depth connection with their prayer life, the role of a member of the Catholic Church, and of course, encourage fellowship, friendship and fun! If students are unable to attend the retreat, we will help them find an alternative retreat with another parish within the Diocese of Lansing at a different date. Please note, retreats vary in lengths and offerings. The Diocese offers a weekend retreat for Confirmation candidates in the summer.

RITE OF WELCOME SUNDAY

In the late Fall of your eight grade year, all 2nd year candidates for confirmation, their parents, and their sponsors are invited to attend a Mass for the Rite of Welcome blessing. This will take place during a regularly scheduled Mass to be determined by the staff in September. All RCIA candidates will also participate in the blessing at this Mass.

40 QUESTIONS

A **40 Question Project** to help you with your knowledge of the Catholic Church and our parish will be given to students in December of their 8th grade year. The questionnaire can be done at your leisure and with the help of the internet and other reference materials (make sure you validate your source – sometimes the internet isn't always correct). It is due at the end of January (see your calendar for exact date).

THE SAINT REPORT

Each confirmation candidate **must select and research a Saint and then write a brief report on them (included in Packet #1).** By learning about one of the Church's Saints, you will have an opportunity to learn about one of the heroes of our faith. Just as we have role models in sports, academics, and music, we too, must have role models in our faith to guide and inspire us. There are many resources available online and in our parish library to help with this project.

SERVICE

Jesus is our model of a servant leader. So that our lives may more closely follow the example of Jesus, the **candidates are expected to participate in a number of service projects** as follows below. In addition, a service project evaluation form must be completed and turned in for each project completed. Forms are in the orientation packet and additional blank forms will be available to print from the website.

- Group Service: Our Middle School youth will have various opportunities to earn service hours through group activities planned throughout the year. You must complete one group or parish service project.
- Candidate/Mentor project: Candidates and their mentors must work on at least one service project together.
- Personal: Candidates are expected to perform service outside of the parish (can be school-sponsored) which are unpaid works to help others in accordance with the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. A minimum of three separate service projects are suggested.

LETTER TO THE BISHOP:

All students are required to write a letter to the bishop of the Diocese of Lansing. This letter is part of the 40 Questions Project and due at the same time the packet is due.

INTERVIEW WITH PASTOR

Sometime in late Spring or Summer of their 8th grade year, students are to contact our Pastor, Fr. Tom Helfrich, to set up an in-person interview. This appointment may be scheduled by the student any time after they have completed Packets No. 1-3 and the 40-Questions.

THE CONFIRMATION DATE

The confirmation mass date for the students of the parishes in the Jackson region is usually in mid-October. We submit a request to the Diocese for an actual date the summer prior and will notify parents when we have received confirmation of the date elected by the Bishop.

QUESTIONS?

Our desire is to adequately prepare your child to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation when they are ready. We want to provide the necessary support and flexibility for your child to receive the Sacrament when they are ready, not according to a specified time line. The requirements listed above are provided to aide in that preparation. If you have any questions, or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact the program director, **Nancy Carter, at 517-592-5718 or Nancy.carter.dre.strita@gmail.com**

We encourage and appreciate the parents' desire to help your youth make the choice to receive Confirmation but affirm the candidates right to make the final decision. Your participation through conversation, support, reminders of mentor meetings, occasional "nagging" about reading material, attendance at Mass and the opportunity for your youth to see you "walk the talk" is key to making this happen. We love our youth and want to give them the best chance at living a life full of faith and love.

May God bless you today and always,

Mrs. Nancy Carter