Welcome to YM Central's Confirmation and Renewal Curriculum. Our program is designed to help you as you prepare High School students for the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation. It is also designed to give your teens a 'jump start' in the Faith so that they can mature and grow as strong, committed young adult Catholics. The following 'Coordinator's Manual' is designed to help you understand and properly implement all of the components of our program.

As always, be sure to begin your planning by closely following your diocesan guidelines for Confirmation. There may be discrepancies between our recommendations and those of your bishop, and while our ideas have worked in the settings in which they were tested, it is important for you to stay faithful to your bishop's guidelines. Even so, our program is meant to be adapted and should not be viewed as something to 'force' on your parish: Our program is simply meant to augment the work you already do. God Bless you as you continue to minister to young people!

If you plan on using the YM Central Confirmation and Renewal Curriculum for renewal purposes only, click here before you continue reading.

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A. Understanding the Sacrament of Confirmation

1. Modern Confusion Over the Sacrament

Of all the confusion regarding sacramental theology that exists in the Church today, the confusion around the Sacrament of Confirmation is an intense and heated battle. For parents, the Sacrament of Confirmation is often an undesirable addition to the already packed schedule of events in the lives of their children. For youth ministers and catechists, Confirmation often means dealing with those teens that don't want anything to do with the Church, with teens who see Confirmation more like 'graduation' from the Church. Perhaps the most frustrating arguments center around our theological understanding of the Sacrament, a confusion which includes teens, parents, Confirmation coordinators, priests, pastors and bishops and theologians. Let's look at some of the sources of this confusion, and what response the Church has.

Many theologians, priests and bishops say that the problem with Confirmation is that it is 'searching for a theology.' According to many of them, the confusion behind Confirmation today is rooted in the age at which the Sacrament is to be administered. This line of reasoning shows us that, to them, the 'age' question dictates the ultimate purpose of the Sacrament: What Confirmation is will be different for someone who is Confirmed as an infant, for someone Confirmed as a child, and for someone Confirmed as an adolescent. However important it is, age is a secondary factor in determining the real essence and meaning behind the sacrament of Confirmation. Confirmation is not a Sacrament searching for a theology: It is a Sacrament searching for a uniform pastoral practice and implementation. This is different than saying that, at its essence, Confirmation has no theology. Below we will discuss the Church's theology of Confirmation by looking at the Rite of Confirmation, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and the Code of Canon Law.

Other misconceptions regarding Confirmation abound among the faithful. Many believe that the Sacrament of Confirmation is a teenage rite of passage, a Christian answer to a bar-mitzvah. Still others think that it is the Sacrament of personal choice for Jesus Christ, a Catholic ritualized version of a protestant altar call. Consequently, a good Confirmation program must emphasize choice, that it is the decision of the candidate that is the essential element in Confirmation theology. Again, these misconceptions mistake age and consequently choice (because of the age of Confirming teens/young adults) as the primary determinants of the Sacrament's theology. However, if we look beyond our own diocese and look at the universal Church, we see that there is not one, uniform age at which the Sacrament is administered. Very often it is given at birth, second grade, junior high school, high school, and (as is the norm of the Church) adulthood. We must reiterate that age does not determine the essence of the Sacrament. To understand the theology of the sacrament of Confirmation, we will look at what God revealed it to be as we see in the Rite of Confirmation, the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) and the Code of Canon Law.

2. The Theological Basis of the Sacrament

Confirmation is a Sacrament of initiation. Looking at Divine Revelation, we see that the Sacrament of Confirmation is intimately linked with the Sacrament of Baptism (one can certainly say that every sacrament is linked with Baptism).

The Rite of Confirmation is our starting point for understanding the theology of Confirmation, because as the Church prays, so she believes. The Rite of Confirmation is made up of three different parts, and these elements will help us see the theology of the Sacrament:

a. **The Renewal of Baptismal Promises**: The candidate pledges for
him/herself before the Church that he/she accepts the beliefs of the Church. It is a pledge that is done freely and publicly. They also pledge that they are willing to respond on their own to what was given to them as infants.

b. **Laying on of Hands**: Next, the bishop, the successor of the Apostles, raises his hands over the candidate and prays for a full release of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, as stated in Isaiah 11:2-3.

c. **Anointing with Chrism**: The last and most essential element of the Rite is the anointing with Chrism oil. This is an ancient rite of strengthening, that originated in Old Testament times.

In the Code of Canon Law, canon 879, we read that Confirmation empowers the Christian to be a witness for the Faith. CCC #1285 states that Confirmation unites us with Baptism and empowers the baptized to become a true witness for Christ.

Simply put, in Baptism the individual becomes a child of God, being reborn in Christ through the Holy Spirit by water into the family of God: Baptism makes us children of God. Confirmation gives the child of God the ability to become an adult Christian, giving the individual a sort of spiritual 'hormone' to become an adult Christian. Being an adult Christian has little to do with age, but rather with one's ability to commit to and pass on the Faith. Thus, even a child (beyond the age of reason) can be an adult in the Faith (given God's grace and their faith response). Conversely, an adult who has received Confirmation can choose to deny his/her faith and not use the grace received at Confirmation. Every Confirmed Catholic does have a choice to make, but only after God has first given that person the grace of spiritual adulthood.

### 3. Elements of Confirmation Preparation

The Church has prescribed universal (but the only) norms for receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation. The Code of Canon Law, canon 889 #1,2, states that Confirmation is the right of the faithful, who must be

- Adequately instructed;
- Properly disposed; and
- Able to renew one's baptismal promises.

The CCC, #1309-1310, says that Confirmation preparation should provide the candidate with

- Intimate union with Christ,
- Familiarity with the Holy Spirit,
- A sense of belonging to the Church, and
- Intense prayer.

In order to receive the grace of the sacrament, the candidate must be in a state of grace and should receive the Sacrament of Confession before getting Confirmed.

In addition to these universal norms for Confirmation preparation, your diocese will have their own guidelines and requirement that are specific to your situation. Be sure to clarify with your pastor and your diocesan office the exact nature of these requirements before beginning your Confirmation
B. Confirmation Preparation Today

As great a Sacrament that Christ has given us in Confirmation, still for many teens, Confirmation has become a time to leave the Church, not enter more deeply into union with her. Confirmation has become a time of 'graduation' from parish religious education programs, with teens (and often parents) becoming bored with the Church, seeing no relevance in the Faith as it pertains to their lives. For a Confirmation program to effectively keep young people in the Church, some important assumptions have to be spelled out:

1. Evangelization is at the Heart of the Confirmation Preparation.

This may come as a surprise to you, because we are often told that Confirmation preparation is a 'catechetical' endeavor. To look at Confirmation as strictly a catechetical or educational endeavor would fail to pinpoint our target audience, and would result in our message falling on deaf ears. We must minister to the teens where they are at in their relationship with God, and as we will see below, this is exactly what the Church desires of us. A typical group of teens in a Confirmation program can be divided into three different categories:

a. One-third of the group is very uncomfortable with being in any kind of church environment, and are far from making a conscious response to their baptismal call. This group is in need of pre-evangelization, the process by which they are made to feel comfortable in a church environment. Food is the easiest and fastest way to make any teen feel comfortable. (We highly recommend pizza and lots of it.) Playing good, quality, loud (yes loud) Christian music is another effective means of making teens feel at home. Another important element in pre-evangelization is the youth meeting space. This space needs to be a dedicated space for teen-use only, complete with a pool table, ping-pong table, video games, stereo systems couches, and whatever else your teens would like to see in that room. The most important element of pre-evangelization is building quality, one-on-one relationships with the teens. These elements are so important that without them, your teens might not be able to open their hearts to the message you will proclaim to them. If you show them that you care for them, they will respond.

b. Another third of the group feels comfortable with being at church, but probably cannot put an answer as to why they are there. For them, they have probably been going to church most of their lives, but have not made a commitment to the person of Christ, have not personally owned their baptismal vows. This group is in need of evangelization, the point at which they make an initial, life-changing commitment to Jesus Christ, to living the moral demands of a Christ-like life, to spending time with Jesus in prayer, and living this within the context of the Family of God, the Church.

c. The last third has already been evangelized and has made commitments (in one form or another) to Jesus and the Church. They are in need of more 'meat', more content, than the rest of the group. This group is looking for the material to answer the fundamentalist, or the atheist. They are in need of catechesis, the handing down of the Deposit of Faith that Christ gave to
the Apostles and their Successors. They are also in need of keeping their commitment to Christ alive, through continual rededication and re-evangelization to Him.

Because two-thirds of the group is in need of evangelization, the primary focus of Confirmation preparation is to evangelize teens, not to catechize them. Remember that good evangelization will help every teen, even those that have already been evangelized.

Let us reflect upon the words of the Church given to us in the 'General Directory for Catechesis' (GDC), published in 1997 by the Congregation for the Clergy. The document tells us that:

> The first stage in the catechetical process be dedicated to ensuring conversion. Only by starting with conversion, and therefore by making allowance for interior disposition of whoever believes, can catechesis, strictly speaking, fulfill its proper task of education in the faith.' (GDC #62)

The teens must first be given the reason why we believe, which is Christ, before they are shown what we believe, His teachings given to us through the Church. The GDC continues to clarify the importance of conversion and evangelization for young people: Frequently contemporary evangelization of young people must adopt a *missionary dimension* rather than strictly a *catechumenal dimension*. (GDC #185) Not only is our work in Confirmation preparation evangelistic, it is also missionary in nature. We are charged with taking Christ to a place where He is not recognized, taken seriously or worshipped. Once we have helped evangelize the candidate, then we can catechize them deeper into Christ.

2. *Families have busy schedules and are short on time.*

Most families today are under the time crunch, beginning with a hectic work schedule, and coupled with the demands of spouses and children. Typical families do not want to engage in a program or event unless it is worth their while. More often then not, they want to be somewhere other than at their Confirmation program. It is important to devise a program that meets their busy schedules. If the program seems too intensive, many families will participate in it unwillingly, with a grudge, often against the youth minister, pastor, bishop, and the Church. In setting up your preparation requirements, make sure that it does not place an undo burden on the participants. If the requirements are too demanding, many teens and parents will enter the program with antagonism. It is important to you to begin your program on a positive note.

3. *Teens are honestly searching for a higher calling to follow.*

Remember that all of us including our teens have literally been made to receive and follow the Gospel. All of these teens want answers to their deepest questions in life, and desire to live for something. They want a purpose, a cause, and have a desire to change the world for the good. They do not want a traditional classroom setting of religions education. For teens, *classroom=school=no fun*: If it is not fun, they will not be open to it. A good litmus test is as follows: If your program was not mandatory, how many teens would continue to come? As religious educators, we must paint for the teens the best possible future, not just for society and the Church, but primarily for their own personal lives. We are called to answer their questions, especially about vocation, service, identity, relationship, sexuality, all while creating a fun community where they feel comfortable simply 'hanging-out'. Teens want to know Jesus personally, not from a textbook, but from the witness of young adults and peers. We must let teen issues and questions shape the presentation of our curriculum, not our perception of what they need, nor what is important in our spiritual lives.
In his encyclical, 'On Catechesis in our Times' (CT), Pope John Paul II tells us the key themes in adolescent catechesis, all of which underscore teens' search for a higher calling. John Paul II tells us that adolescence is, "the age of deep questioning, of anguished or even frustrating searching, of certain mistrust of others and dangerous introspection, and the age sometimes of the first experiences of setbacks and disappointments." (CT #38) Our response to these conditions is done through a catechesis that:

- Helps the adolescent re-examine his or her life;
- Helps the adolescent answer his or her great questions, including self-giving, belief, love and the means of expressing it constituted by sexuality;
- Helps the adolescent develop a relationship with Jesus Christ as Friend, Guide and Model, especially through reflection on His passion, death and Resurrection. (CT #38)

Given these needs, the Church tells us that our catechesis needs to be strongly Christocentric, that everything we teach needs to be taught in relation to Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity. Jesus’ identity separates Him from all other people who have ever existed, for this One Person is both fully God and fully man. He is one Divine Person (‘Who’ He is) with two natures (‘What’ He is), human and divine. Our Christ-centered catechesis begins with Jesus but leads us into full communion with the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). The Trinity is both the source and goal of our existence. The Trinity is not three gods, nor is the Trinity One God with three different modes of being (as water can be ice, liquid and vapour). The Trinity is One, subsisting of three Divine Persons who are each distinct from each other, but intimately united in substance, One God in Three Persons. Our Faith is never about Jesus alone – rather, it is through Christ that we participate in the life of the Trinity. Our catechesis also needs to be systematic, connecting the themes of our Faith in a unified manner. We must stress, however, that it is not the goal of this Confirmation program to provide a complete catechetical offering for teens. That task lies outside of this scope and must be addressed by parish and high school youth programs in a comprehensive manner.

4. Youth ministers need a program to implement that is simple and time-efficient.

Youth ministers, whether they are full-time, part-time, or volunteer, have little time: An hour given to Confirmation preparation is an hour away from another part of their program. A good Confirmation program needs to be easy to administer and not overwhelming. A two-year program that meets every consecutive Wednesday from 6pm-9pm including summers, that has a requirement of 2000 service hours, that ministers to 250 candidates, that requires a team of 50 adults, that has the teens going on one weekend retreat a month, and that has one sponsor meeting per week, will kill a Confirmation coordinator. Don't feel the need to have your program be the end-all of their Christian formation, nor should you feel the need to make your program more demanding than the diocesan seminary. If you look at your program and get burned-out just thinking about it, then make it more manageable.

5. The principles of good, exciting youth ministry apply to Confirmation preparation because their goals and the participants are the same.

Simply put, the goal of youth ministry is to lead teens to Christ through the Church. Confirmation preparation, like any youth ministry activity, does this through the Church by means of liturgy, presentation of the Gospel and catechesis, and by loving each teen that comes into our program. Each one of these elements are the tools we use to help teens enter the conversion process, from pre-evangelization to evangelization to catechesis. For a better understanding of youth ministry principles, see YMCentral's Building the Civilization of Love:
C. Goal/Elements of Confirmation Preparation

The goal of Confirmation preparation might not be what you think. Our preparation is not meant primarily to prepare the candidates for their moment with the bishop. Were this the case, we would be preparing them for 'Graduation' (a rite of passage) from the Church instead of ' Confirmation' (a moment of growth in our faith that leads to deeper conversion and discipleship). The goal of the Confirmation preparation is to set an environment for High School teens to respond to Christ's basic invitation to follow Him. 'Setting an environment' means that teens are invited, not forced, to make their decision to follow Jesus. There is no place for coercion or manipulation, but always freedom. This means that the teen may say 'no', but we must remember that even God will not force them to make decisions that they themselves do not want. On the other hand, we are charged to form the teens for life-long active participation in the Church, helping them form their identity in Christ as their dominant identity. The life in Christ must be portrayed as all-penetrating, that there is no part of our life from which Christ is exempt.

So how do you set this environment? How are teens to be properly instructed in the Faith? It is done through the very gifts that Christ has given us: The Liturgy, the Faith, Personal Prayer and a living witness. In order to keep our teens evangelized and help them remain in the Church as adults, we must teach them how these elements keep them committed to Jesus.

1. Liturgy

The most important element to set with your teens is the liturgical element. The scope of this program will not outline for you the specifics of this element of the process. Suffice it to say that there must be frequent opportunities for the candidates to attend Mass as a group, to go to Confession, and to pray together as a group. If weekly Mass is the most basic commitment of the Catholic, then your Confirmation process will need to have frequent opportunities for the teens to participate in the Sacraments.

2. Instruction

The next way to achieve your goal is through a dynamic and evangelistic presentation of Christ and how He influences our lives. It is important to remember that the presentation of the Faith must be evangelistic, giving the teens the fundamental understanding of Christ, the Church, answering their basic questions on Catholicism, and helping them to make and keep a commitment to Christ and His Church. It is not appropriate to give the teens more content than they can handle or for which they are ready. Our Confirmation Program is meant to help you with this content.

3. Prayer

Confirmation preparation must include teaching the teens how to pray, not only by your example, but by giving them the resources they need in order to develop that prayer life. This is why we recommend that you give each of your candidates a Bible and YM Central’s 'Catholic Youth Survival Guide' book. Part of connecting them to Christ is helping the candidates develop their own devotional life.
4. Witness and Service

Finally, you will need to teach your teens how to make their lives a witness to Christ. Having team members give testimonies about Christ's work in their lives accomplishes this, as does having the teens do works of mercy and service to the poor. This way, they will learn to be Christ to each other and see Christ in each other and will develop patterns of service that last a lifetime.

D. Models of Confirmation Preparation

First, your diocesan guidelines are your primary source for your model of Confirmation preparation. Your diocese may mandate a two-year program, or a one-year program, or leave it to the pastor's discretion. Whatever your situation, please factor into account all the suggestions listed in point ‘B’ above to make your program attractive to as many parents and teens as possible. If parents feel like they are being asked to do too much, they might rebel, and will be less likely to listen to you, no matter how great your message is. (Remember, too, that they are the primary educators.) So let's look at some sample ways to package the material. If you already have a youth program at your parish, our recommendation is that your teens be required to attend a minimal portion of it, without turning your youth group into a 'required' Confirmation class.

1. Two-Year Process

If your bishop has mandated a two-year process, you will have the opportunity to build quality relationships with parents, and teens. Our recommendation for the first year is to schedule, along with your Confirmation preparation meetings, one social event per month, beginning with an information night for parents and teens, and meeting once a month following through the academic year. Don't underestimate the importance of simply building community at the start. Your process must begin to evangelize teens. This is done first by making them feel welcome (and a good social event will accomplish this), then answering their basic questions about the Faith. Most teens need to grow in their comfort level at the Church, so don't apologize for starting the program by having fun and building relationships. Give parents and candidates time-off during the summer, but take time to get to know each candidate in your program by inviting them into your parish’s youth ministry events, especially social events.

2. One-Year Process

If the one-year process is the length of your program, then our recommendation is that you start it with the Information meeting for parents and teens, followed by the kickoff meeting for teens and then into the Confirmation weekend retreat for the teens. By starting it off with the retreat, you create THE environment you are looking for at the beginning, an environment where teens begin the conversion process. Once the teens understand and experience conversion, then they will be open to anything you want to teach them. The Confirmation Retreat can be followed with the following sample formats:

a. Fall/Spring Semester: You plan your calendar so that, for every Monday (or day of your choice) throughout the school year (with holidays off), your program will meet from 7:00pm-8:30pm.

b. Days of Renewal: Instead of meeting on a weekly basis over an entire year, you pack the material into 6 Sunday (or day of your choice) day retreats. For example, if you have a Sunday evening Mass, your program can meet during the day and lead into Mass. If you have a youth group
meeting following Mass, you can have your Confirmation group attend it.

To help you plan your Days of Renewal, please click on the resources below:

Sample Schedule  Sample Checklist  Sample Menu  Parent Letter

c. Week-long Camp: This idea works best in summer. Take your candidates and team members away for a week-long experience that combines your weekend retreat, instructional sessions, and service project into one big experience.

3. High School Settings

If you do Confirmation preparation in a High school setting, our recommendation is that you want to make your program as 'unclassroom' like as possible. This means that you will need to find a meeting space that is not a classroom, but a place where teens like to hang out and can relax. (This doesn't mean that the space looks like a locker room and is void of religious symbols. Perhaps you have a chapel that would be a good meeting space.) Pull your candidates out at the beginning of the year for the weekend (or whatever three days you choose) Confirmation retreat, then follow up with the sessions. Our recommendation is to close the retreat with a Mass that includes parents and sponsors. The sessions can be spaced out as often as you would like (weekly model, day of renewal model), but we strongly recommend not doing them in a classroom.

For a layout of the entire curriculum, click here.

For a layout of sample curriculum options, click here.

4. Follow-Up

This is one of the most essential, but most difficult parts of the program, because no longer are teens required to attend. It is now their own decision if they want to attend. It will be up to the school or parish to implement an overall youth program that can minister to the teens holistically, not just for Confirmation preparation. This programming, combined with solid relationship building with adult mentors, will be the key to having teens stay in the Church after Confirmation.

E. Program Components

1. The Confirmation Team

A program as big as Confirmation preparation is never run by one person: It requires a team of committed adults to minister to the candidates. Let's look at some elements that are needed to build a successful team.

a. Team Member Job Descriptions: It is important to know exactly what you expect of your team members. That is why a job description is so important. Providing a job description to team members will help you look professional, will help the team members have a clear picture of their responsibilities, and will give each of you a frame of reference from which conflicts can be resolved.
b. **Choosing a team**: This is arguably the most important task you have in Confirmation preparation, for there is nothing worse than having the wrong person in the crucial job as a team member, a person called to be a catechist. Remember that these people's primary task will be to pass on the Faith to high school teens, so their position can't be taken lightly. Therefore, you will want to interview each person individually before they are brought on to your team. These people must at least fulfill the requirements of a sponsor, but must also be free from a scandalous lifestyle and be able to relate to teens, that is, have the ability to strike up a conversation with them and take time to relate to them. They must be able to articulate their love for and commitment to Christ and the Church. Try to recruit one team member for every five teens in your program.

c. **Training a team**: So often religious educators make the mistake of simply handing the catechist a teacher's manual and letting them run the class without any formal training. Make sure that each team member has experience and training in the following areas:

- [Leading Small Group Discussions](#)
- [Giving a personal Testimony](#)
- [Giving a teaching (if applicable)](#)
- [Individual Session Outline](#)

For teaching handouts to use on these subjects, click on them.

Your team training can happen in different contexts (weekend retreats, day retreats, evenings, etc), depending upon the schedules of your team members.

For a sample team training schedule, click [here](#).

For a sample team day retreat, click [here](#).

d. **Maintaining a team**: Good teamwork requires the three 'P's': Be sure to include time for your team to **Party**, (socialize, share meals, go out for 'fun' time, etc.), to **Pray** and to **Plan**. The more cohesive your team, the better your program will run, and the more the candidates will be touched by Christ. Schedule regular times for team socializing, team prayer and team planning. This requires frequent and often communication on your part, and will help raise the standard of the entire program by keeping people accountable. An important part of teamwork is healthy Christian conflict resolution. Problems will arise among your team: The first rule of thumb is to try to have the conflict resolved on the lowest managerial level possible. In other words, a conflict between two team members should not be immediately resolved by anyone else except the team members. Don't bring the pastor in right away. Also, a conflict should never be shared with anyone on the same managerial level or below. If two team members are having a conflict, they should not be sharing it with any other team members, and should never be sharing it with candidates or parents. Nothing divides a team quicker than poorly resolved conflicts. Be sure to
take care of them quickly. Finally, never doubt the importance of constant affirmation and appreciation. You need to regularly tell them that you love them and are thankful for their work. Take them out on occasion for ice cream, your treat. Don't be cheap with your appreciation. When the program has ended, sit down with each one of them as soon as possible to evaluate how they did so they can know exactly where they stand with you.

2. Program Events

You and your pastor, in conjunction with your diocesan guidelines, will determine how your program is run. The following suggestions have worked for us, and hope they will help you.

a. **Intro meeting with parents:** As much as we may love ministering to teens, their primary educators are their parents. It is absolutely essential to keep parents informed and to allow them to make alternative plans for their teens, even if that creates havoc for you. The tone for the entire program is set at the beginning information meeting, which includes parents and potential candidates. Our curriculum includes a full outline of that meeting. At it, please make the following forms available to them:

   - [Candidate Registration Form](#)
   - [Sponsor Registration Form](#)
   - [Parent Registration Form](#)
   - [Pastor Consent Form](#)
   - [Verification of Service Hours Form](#)
   - [Sample Parent Information Pack](#)

   To view sample copies of these forms, click on them.

   The most important document you need from them is a copy of their baptismal certificate, since the prerequisite for reception of Confirmation is a valid baptism. Be sure to get this from them up-front as their 'ticket' to participation in the program.

   Use the Parent Registration form as a way to solicit help from them in the implementation of the program. Be sure to keep them up-to-date with frequent mailings and information.

b. **Intro Meeting with Teen candidates (no parents):** Use this meeting to let the candidates know your exact expectations of them for participation in the program. Our curriculum includes a full outline of that meeting.

c. **First Interview with Youth Minister:** Early in your process, take some time to get to know each teen individually. Tell them that you will be calling them to schedule an informal, get-to-know-you meeting, no longer than 30 minutes, at your office. When you meet with them, keep the conversation on them, their interests, and their family. If you have time available at the end of your interview, answer any questions they have about the process and the Faith.

d. **Weekend Retreat:** Early in the process, schedule the Confirmation
Retreat. The Confirmation retreat is meant to stir up their relationship with Christ, and will become an anchor on which the entire rest of the program can be built. Available with our curriculum is a full outline of this weekend. Please note that, in our curriculum, candidates begin discussing potential Confirmation names on the retreat.

To obtain a copy of the weekend retreat, click here.

e. **Sessions:** How you schedule your sessions depends, of course, on the model you choose. With our curriculum, we give you a sample meeting outline and background material for each meeting. The model you choose is up to you. Your meetings must avoid any appearance of a classroom-type setting: The last thing we should want to do is to have them equate the Faith with their 'boring' classes.

For tips on running a successful youth meeting, click here.

Supplement the sessions with this short question and answer section that will help the teens memorize important facts about life in the Church.

Twenty Questions: What Every Catholic Should Be Able to Answer – by Heart!, click here.

f. **Sponsor Qualifications/Involvement:** Confirmation candidates must have sponsors who will accompany them through the preparation process and present them to the Bishop as worthy candidates. For a full listing of the Church's requirements for being a sponsor, check the Code of Canon Law, Canon 872-874, 892-893, and consult your diocesan guidelines.

First, pull the sponsors aside and clearly explain to them the requirements (a sample sponsor orientation meeting is below). It will be important to schedule meaningful interaction between candidates and sponsors throughout the process, and yet respect their schedules and the demands on their time. Our suggestion is to have the sponsors participate monthly in your candidate meetings, scheduling time at the meetings for them to interact with their candidate and discuss their faith (not sports, movies, etc). If a sponsor can't commit to a monthly meeting, then the candidate is free to pick a proxy sponsor (who must have the same qualifications as their actual sponsor) to act as a fill-in.

For Sponsor Registration form, click here.

For sample Candidate/sponsor activities, click here.

For an outline of the sponsor orientation meeting, click here.

g. **Service Projects:** As we prepare our candidates to become adult members of our Church, we must teach them how to serve Christ in others. True meaning in vocation and life comes through service. Teaching service and justice through real-life events (not just teaching in a classroom) is essential to their formation. Our suggestion here for you is to do the service projects as group events, not the accumulation of hours. Teens love to do things in a group, so this will automatically appeal to them. Too often a service 'hours' approach pushes the teens to focus more on 'how much' they have done, rather than 'what' they have done. Our
primary consideration for teaching them service and justice is to help them recognize Christ in the other, especially those less fortunate than us. We recommend that you schedule a few hours (no more than 10) of group service projects. This can be done at one shot, or perhaps over two days. Places like 'Habitat for Humanity' provide the candidates great group and service opportunities. Be sure to include a time of prayer in your day, as well as some time at the end of the day to have the teens share how they experienced Christ. If you have them do too many projects or hours, you risk forcing the experience on them and having it lose meaning to them. Give them just a taste, enough to whet their appetite.

Another question that often comes up surrounds students who do service projects at their schools. We recommend that you 'count' these projects for service credit in your Confirmation program. Service is service, wherever it is done: No reason to make them do double. Just get an authority from their institution to 'sign-off' on their work (a sample verification form is below).

For a 'Verification of Service Hours' form, click here.

h. Final Interview: About a month before the candidates receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, make sure each candidate has the opportunity to go through a final interview. The purpose of this time is to see if they want to be confirmed and to help answer any questions they might have about the Faith. The interview can be done a number of different ways. It can be done by the pastor, and/or by the Confirmation coordinator. A 'Final Interview Sheet' is provided for you below that the candidates can fill out before they come to that meeting. The interview could also be done by the sponsors at your last session with them and the candidates. In this case, have the sponsors fill out the 'Final Interview Sheet' with the candidate as they conduct the interview, then upon completion, give it to the Confirmation coordinator. At the time of this interview, all their paperwork should be in place, including their choice of a Confirmation name. When done with their interview, remind them that, as Confirmed Catholics, they are being called to deeper service. Have them fill out a 'Ministry Sign-up' form so they can begin to minister back to the community.

Below, we will discuss what action to take if a teen either does not want to be confirmed, or if the teen is not ready to be confirmed.

For a copy of the 'Final Interview Sheet', click here.

For a copy of the Ministry sign-up form, click here.

i. Rehearsal and Confirmation Liturgy: Be sure to schedule a rehearsal one to two days before the actual celebration of the Rite, walking the candidates through every part of the Rite of Confirmation.

j. Follow-Up Social: Two to three weeks after they receive the Sacrament, gather the newly-confirmed together for an ice cream social, allowing for time of testimony and prayer.

3. Administration of Program
Once again, consult your diocesan guidelines for specifics from your bishop. We will assume that the age of reception will be determined by your bishop.

a. **Class Size:** Obviously, you are in little control of this, since it is the candidates and parents who register for your program. If a baptized teen approaches us for the Sacrament, we cannot turn them away. A lack of money on their part, or an overwhelming class size is not their problem. Some of you will have 10 candidates, while others will have 250 in your program. The larger your program, the more time consuming it will be to administer: Our recommendation is that any program greater than 100 candidates be run by a full-time coordinator. At this level, the coordinator will need to divide and conquer: The group has potential to be too unruly if the situation is not remedied beforehand. Our suggestion is that if the group is larger than 100, divide it into three groups. Your preparation process would need to last no more than one semester, and you would be offering it in the Fall, Spring, and Summer. You would give the candidates their choice as to when they would participate in the preparation. This would be a departure from any of the above curriculum models. Remember that not dividing the group will open the door to difficult discipline and group maintenance issues.

An effective teen/team member ratio is 5 teens for every one team member. If you have 100 candidates, then you would need 20 team members.

b. **Attendance and Choice:** Let's begin by reminding ourselves that the Sacrament of Confirmation is not primarily about choice: Choice is a consequence of the age of the preparation. Nonetheless, it is important to give the candidates every opportunity to make their own free choice to decide for themselves whether they want to receive the Sacrament or not. This freedom is essential to the individual, for no person is to be forced into receiving the Sacrament.

Looking at the Code of Canon Law under the Sacrament of Baptism, we see that adults are those who have reached the age of reason, traditionally the age of seven. (Canon 852 1 The provisions of the canons on adult baptism apply to all those who, being no longer infants, have reached the use of reason.) Therefore, teens have the freedom to decide for themselves whether they want to be confirmed or not. It must be perfectly clear that we are never to force them into the Sacrament they must desire it themselves. (Canon 865 1 To be admitted to baptism, an adult must have manifested the intention to receive baptism, must be adequately instructed in the truths of the faith and in the duties of a Christian, and tested in the Christian life over the course of the catechumenate.) Without the intention of receiving the Sacrament, we cannot give it to them.

Attendance needs to be guided by the principle outlined in Canon 889, 2, that the candidate is to be 'suitably instructed'. This requires the judgment of the pastor, informed by the Confirmation coordinator, to determine if the candidate is ready. If a person has gone through all the channels of preparation, and wants to get Confirmed, then we must assume that that person is ready. If the person expresses a desire to get Confirmed, is lacking in attendance, but does suitable 'make-up' work for what was missed, then we must assume that that person is ready to receive the Sacrament. (It is best to come up with a plan of 'make-up' work that is mutually agreed upon by both the candidate and the Confirmation
coordinator, not just forced upon by the Confirmation coordinator.) If however, the candidate is not willing to make up any missed programming, then we must assume that the person really does not want to receive the Sacrament. Other factors besides a lack of willingness may hold back the candidate from doing make-up work: This can include sickness, reasonable schedule conflicts, etc. These reasons should not be held against the candidate's standing.

c. **Discipline**: It will be very difficult in the scope of this manual to say much about discipline, except to stress that it is essential for the well-being of your group and the spiritual growth of the participants that you are loving, yet firm on discipline. Remember this adage: The tail does not wag the dog. In other words, you, not the candidates, are to be in control of the meetings. This means that you are both proactive, setting an environment that allows teens to hang out without getting into trouble, and when necessary reactive, disciplining them for any inappropriate behavior. If a teens' behavior is consistently inappropriate, then the Confirmation coordinator and (ultimately) the pastor need to decide if the teen is ready for the Sacrament. Don't let one person bring down the entire group.

To help you with the organization of your program, download our Confirmation Administrative Worksheets (in MS Excel format) by clicking [here](#).

**F. Preliminary Meeting found [here](#).**

God Bless you as you bring our young people deeper into a relationship with Christ and His Church!

**G. Bibliography**

**Church Documents/Resources:**


**Other Resources:**

- **Catechism Cliff Sheets.** Westlake Village: Veritas Communications, 1997.

