



ST. GERTRUDE  
CHURCH



# Confirmation Preparation Candidate Handbook 2023-2024

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# Welcome to Confirmation Preparation

As we begin this year, a quote from St. John Henry Newman comes to mind: "God has determined, unless I interfere with His plan, that I should reach that which will be my greatest happiness. He looks on me individually, He calls me by my name, He knows what I can do, what I can best be, what is my greatest happiness, and He means to give it me."

Take a moment to read that quote again. (No, really, read it again.) He calls you by name. He means to give you your greatest happiness. That's pretty amazing. The God who created the stars has you personally in mind. He has you where you need to be so that you can begin to live life and live it abundantly (Jn 10:10). As we prepare for the sacrament of Confirmation together, I am so excited to see how that comes to be. This is the start of something great, and I am glad you are here.

## What is Confirmation Preparation?

We want to help each Confirmation candidate and his or her family live out their deepest identities: beloved sons and daughters of the Father. We do that through two years of formation, beginning in seventh grade and ending in eighth grade. Candidates have the opportunity to receive the sacrament of Confirmation at the end of their eighth grade year.\*

In those two years, we foster encounters with Jesus Christ through engaging and faithful teaching, opportunities for prayer, fellowship, and service. We involve parents in many of these elements and expect candidates and their families to spend time growing in an intentional relationship with Jesus Christ and his Church on a daily basis.

## What Is This Handbook About?

This handbook is meant to help those preparing for Confirmation (the Church refers to them as "candidates"), parents, and sponsors easily keep track of what to do, when to do it, and who should be involved in each element of formation. Much of what you will need can be read or printed straight from the text included in the following pages.

You are in my prayers as we head into this new year of formation together!

God bless,  
Walter Plummer, Coordinator of Youth Formation

\*St. Gertrude School and home-schooled students are invited to participate in Confirmation Preparation! However, they are not expected to attend all events in order to be confirmed. Please contact Walter Plummer, coordinator of youth formation, for more information.

# Candidate Checklist

## All Candidates (Seventh and Eighth Graders)

- Kickoff Meeting: Sunday, August 27, 2023 | 10-11:15 a.m. or 11:30-12:45 p.m. | St. Gertrude School Cafeteria  
*All candidates and parents should attend. Learn more on page 3.*
- John 1:38 Letter | Complete by Sunday, September 24, 2023  
*Learn more on page 5.*
- Formation Meetings: Second & Fourth Sundays | 10-11:15 a.m. or 11:30-12:45 p.m. | St. Gertrude School Cafeteria  
*Learn more on page 3.*
- Retreat: Saturday, November 11, 2023 | Woodland Lakes Retreat Center (Amelia, OH)  
*Learn more on page 3.*
- Parent and Candidate Sessions: January 14, April 28 | 10-11:15 a.m. or 11:30-12:45 p.m. | St. Gertrude School Cafeteria  
*Learn more on page 5.*
- Teaching Mass: Friday, January 16 OR 30, 2024 | 6:30-7:30 p.m. | Church  
*All candidates and parents should attend. Learn more on page 4.*
- Personal Spiritual Plan Meetings | Complete by Sunday, April 7, 2024  
*Learn more on page 6.*

## Eighth Grade Candidates Only

- Letter to the Pastor: Due Wednesday, January 31, 2024  
*To be completed by the candidate. Learn more on page 7.*
- Sponsor Form: Due Wednesday, January 31, 2024  
*To be completed by the sponsor. Learn more on page 8.*
- Baptismal Certificate with Sacramental Notations\*: Due Wednesday, January 31, 2024  
*Learn more on page 9. \*Only for those who have NOT received Baptism at St. Gertrude Church.*
- Candidate & Sponsor Meeting: Sunday, February 4, 2024 | 1:15-3 p.m.  
*All candidates and sponsors should attend. Learn more on page 4.*
- Confirmation Rehearsal: Friday, April 19, 2024 | 6-8 p.m.  
*All candidates and sponsors required. Learn more on page 4.*
- Confirmation Mass: Sunday, April 21, 2024 | 2 p.m.  
*All candidates and sponsors required. Learn more on page 4.*

# Scheduled Events

## All Candidates

### Kickoff Meeting

**Sunday, August 27, 2022 | 10-11:15 a.m. or 11:30-12:45 p.m. | St. Gertrude School Cafeteria**

**Who: All candidates and parents**

All candidates and parents are invited to our opening session to meet other candidates and families, talk about the year ahead, and discuss your questions. Please plan for at least one parent to attend with each candidate.

### Monthly Formation Meetings

**Second and Fourth Sundays (Dates below) | 10-11:15 a.m. or 11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m. | St. Gertrude Parish Center**

**Who: All candidates**

Twice each month, we gather to ask some of life's big questions and discuss how they relate to Confirmation. These sessions typically involve active games, talks, small group discussion, and prayer. We are on a two-year rotation of content:

- Year A (2023-2024) - Who is God? (Kerygma)
- Year B (2024-2025) - Who Are We? (Christian Anthropology)

#### **Dates for 2023-2024**

- September 10 & 24
- October 8 & 22
- November 12
- December 10
- January 14 (Parent & Candidate session) & 28
- February 11 & 25
- March 10 & 24
- April 14 & 28 (Parent & Candidate session)

### Confirmation Retreat

**Saturday, November 11, 2023 | 10 a.m.-5p.m. | Woodland Lakes Retreat Center (Amelia, OH)**

**Who: All candidates**

Prior to significant moments in his public ministry, Jesus stepped away to rest and be with his Father. Prior to their confirmation, all candidates are asked to do the same through games, personal stories of faith, and times of prayer. This year, we will hold our retreat at Woodland Lakes Christian Camp and Retreat Center in Amelia, OH. We'll send more details about transportation, the schedule, and what to bring closer to the event.

## Teaching Mass

**Tuesday, January 16 or 30 2023 | 6:30-7:30 p.m.**

**St. Gertrude Church**

**Who: All candidates and parents**

The Eucharist is the source and summit of our Christian life, and each Sunday Mass is a brief taste of heaven itself. This is what the Church teaches. Yet that seems a far cry from the experience of many Catholics who struggle with boredom, disengagement, and disinterest in the Mass (myself-Walter- included). Where's the disconnect? Why is this happening? In these brief sessions, we want to talk about just that. Our focus this year is on the Opening Rites and the Liturgy of the Word.

## Parent & Candidate Sessions

**Sunday, January 14 & April 28 | 10-11:15 a.m. or 11:30-12:45 p.m. | St. Gertrude School Cafeteria**

**Who: Candidates and parents**

Study after study confirms that the greatest influence on a young person's faith life is his or her parents, their practice of faith, and the quality of relationship between young people and their parents. We want to take time during our year to acknowledge that and support parents and candidates with intentional conversations of faith.

## **Eighth Grade Candidates Only**

### Candidate & Sponsor Meeting

**Sunday, February 4, 2024 | 1:15-3 p.m. | St. Gertrude School Cafeteria**

**Who: Candidates and sponsors**

In the middle of our year of formation, there will be a special event for candidates and sponsors to ask three key questions: What will happen at Confirmation? Why? How can I prepare for that? If a sponsor is unable to attend, a parent can attend in his or her place.

### Confirmation Rehearsal

**Friday, April 19, 2024 | 6-8 p.m. | St. Gertrude Church and Parish Center**

**Who: Candidates and sponsors**

Prior to the Confirmation Mass, we will walk through the candidates' and sponsors' roles and actions and what will be different about the Confirmation Mass. We will also set aside time for prayer and the sacrament of Reconciliation to help candidates fruitfully receive their full initiation into the Church.

## Confirmation Mass

**Sunday, April 21, 2024 | 2 p.m. | St. Gertrude Church**

### **Who: Candidates and sponsors**

We will celebrate the sacrament of Confirmation at a special Mass for candidates and families with Monsignor Steve Angi as the presider. Candidates and sponsors should plan to arrive by 1:30 p.m. A brief reception will follow in the Parish Center.

### *Confirmation Mass Dress Code for Candidates and Sponsors*

- Women: Dresses or skirts should be no shorter than the knee. No bare shoulders. Dress shoes may have a low heel. No athletic shoes or flip flops.
- Men: Dress shirts, no polos or tee shirts (must have collar). Pants should be worn with a belt. No baggy or cargo pants. Jacket and tie are required. Suit/coat/blazer should be in a classic pattern or solid color. Dress shoes, no athletic or open-toed shoes.

# Other Program Elements

## John 1:38 Letter

### Letters Due September 24, 2023

The first words Jesus speaks in the Gospel of John are in Chapter 1, verse 38: "What are you looking for?" He asks the same of us today. At the start of this year, we invite you to respond to him. We're asking each candidate this year to write a brief letter that answers these questions:

- Why are you in Confirmation Preparation this year? (Please be honest! If it's just because mom made you, it's okay to say that! If it's because you love Jesus, you can say that, too!)
- What do you want most in life? How do you think you can get to that point?
- How does Confirmation Preparation relate to what you want most? (If you don't know, please say that, too! Again, there's no wrong answer to this question.)

Letters can be any length, as long as they answer the questions. Candidates should handwrite or type the letters themselves. Letters will be shared with small group leaders to help them best support each candidate.

# Personal Spiritual Plan

Due April 7, 2024

## What Is a Personal Spiritual Plan?

A Personal Spiritual Plan (PSP) is a way for each candidate to:

1. Intentionally grow in his or her relationship with Jesus Christ and his Church.
2. Have meaningful conversations with parents and mentors (sponsors if possible) about faith in Jesus and what it means to follow him.

## Why Are We Doing PSPs This Year?

Studies from the past 20 years have confirmed the Church's teaching: honest, healthy, and loving conversations about faith with parents and adult mentors are key to passing on the faith to our young people. Practical experience has taught us that adults gain just as much as adolescents from these conversations. Our PSPs are meant to help candidates, parents, and families have good conversations about life, faith, God, and the Church.

## How Does a PSP Work?

A PSP consists of four meetings focused on four essential pillars of Christian life:

1. Character: Healthy and holy habits, attitudes, and relationships
2. Intellectual Life: Understanding who God is and how to live as his beloved
3. Spirituality: Healthy and meaningful personal and shared prayer life
4. Pastoral Mission: Sharing the Good News with others in word and action

At the end of each meeting, candidates, parents, and sponsors set a personal goal to apply to their daily lives until the next meeting.

## What Do We Do at the Meetings?

Each meeting includes prayer, shared learning, and discussion about the pillar in question. See the Personal Spiritual Plan Guide for more details!

## Who Should Be Involved?

We ask that at least one parent and the candidate's sponsor or another spiritual mentor participate in the PSP process. Because we want these loving and Christian adult disciples to encourage and model what it means to grow in a relationship with Jesus Christ and his Church, we ask that the parent(s) and sponsor/mentor also each develop and share their own PSP with their candidate.

## Do I Need to Turn Anything In?

Yes! To help keep one another accountable, candidates should complete a meeting log after each of the four meetings. You can view and access the [simple form](#) on our Confirmation webpage at [stgertrude.org/confirmation](http://stgertrude.org/confirmation). All four logs are due on April 7, 2024.



# Program Elements for Eighth Grade Candidates Only

## CANDIDATE LETTER TO THE PASTOR

### What is this letter?

Confirmation is often called “the sacrament of Christian maturity” (CCC 1308). In part, this means that all candidates are called first to receive the sacrament with a sincere “yes,” and second to be committed to a daily and living relationship with Jesus Christ and his Church. It is important for candidates to clearly say “yes” to the spiritual father of our faith family, our pastor. The purpose of this letter is to express the desire to be confirmed and an understanding of what Confirmation means, and to ask our pastor (on behalf of the Church) to accept you as a candidate for Confirmation.

### How should this letter be written?

This is a formal letter asking for full initiation into the mystical Body of Christ. That means the letter should:

- be typed or clearly handwritten,
- be addressed to our pastor (Father John Paul Walker, O.P.),
- end with a formal closing (e.g. God bless, Sincerely, Respectfully, etc.),
- include your handwritten signature (leave four spaces for this), and
- include your typed or clearly handwritten name under your signature.

### What is the content of this letter?

- Your own words. It is not important that you write a prize-winning essay. It is important that you are honest and write from your own understanding.
- Answers to the following questions:
  - What does the Church tell us that Confirmation is? (See CCC 1285-1321 and Acts 2.)
  - Do you want to receive the sacrament of Confirmation? Why or why not?
  - If you desire to receive the sacrament, how will you live out the grace and call of Confirmation in your daily life? (See CCC 1303.)
  - No one can walk the path of faith without guides. Tell us about a saint or beatified person whose life inspires you to draw closer to Christ. What is significant about his or her life? How do you want to emulate this saint?
  - At Confirmation, the presider will say “\_\_\_\_\_, be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.” That name can be a saint or your baptismal name. What name will you receive at Confirmation? Why have you chosen this name?

Please email Walter Plummer, coordinator of youth formation, a scanned photo or copy of your letter, or mail/drop off your letter at the parish office by Tuesday, January 31, 2023. Mailed envelopes can be addressed to St. Gertrude Church, ATTN: Walter Plummer, Coordinator of Youth Formation.

## CONFIRMATION SPONSOR FORM

Please have your sponsor fill out and return this form to Walter Plummer, coordinator of youth formation, by Wednesday, January 31, 2024.

SPONSOR'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
FIRST MIDDLE LAST

CANDIDATE'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
FIRST LAST

SPONSOR'S CITY AND STATE OF RESIDENCE: \_\_\_\_\_

SPONSOR'S EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

In accepting the responsibility of sponsoring this candidate and initialing each line, I affirm that:

1. I am not a parent of this candidate. \_\_\_\_\_
2. I have received the sacraments of initiation: (Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation). \_\_\_\_\_
3. I am at least 16 years of age. \_\_\_\_\_
4. I participate weekly in Sunday or Saturday Vigil Mass and give witness to my faith in Christ Jesus by receiving Holy Communion. \_\_\_\_\_
5. If married, I was married in the Catholic Church and according to the laws of the Church. \_\_\_\_\_
6. I believe all that the Catholic Church professes and teaches, and I truly make an effort to incorporate these teachings in my daily life. \_\_\_\_\_
7. I am aware that I am assuming responsibility to be a role model and mentor for the person I am sponsoring by my life of prayer and my Christian example. \_\_\_\_\_

Name of your home parish: \_\_\_\_\_

Address of your home parish: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

(Arch)Diocese: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you (the sponsor) a registered parishioner at this parish:  Yes  No

Name of the pastor of your home parish: \_\_\_\_\_

"Pastors must ascertain the spiritual qualifications of sponsors. The sponsor for any candidate may be male or female and is to be sufficiently mature, a practicing Catholic, who has himself/herself been confirmed and has not been prohibited by law from exercising the role of sponsor. One of the Baptismal sponsors is not only allowed, but is in fact desired as the Confirmation sponsor, so as to emphasize the relationship between Baptism and Confirmation" (Canon 893). This person is an active witness of the Catholic faith in both word and deed and is able to perform the duties of a Confirmation sponsor.

Pastor's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Affix Church Seal:

## **BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATE WITH SACRAMENTAL NOTATIONS**

**Due January 31, 2024**

### **What Is a Baptismal Certificate with Sacramental Notations?**

At Baptism, each person's name is entered in the sacramental register of the parish in which that person is baptized. Whenever that person receives a sacrament of initiation, the person's original parish of Baptism is notified and that information is entered into the sacramental register of that parish. The baptismal parish is then able to send a certificate to any other parish in the world with a record of the sacraments of initiation a person has received.

### **Who Needs to Ask for One?**

Only those who have not received Baptism at St. Gertrude Church need to ask for a baptismal certificate with sacramental notations. If a candidate has been baptized here at St. Gertrude, we will already have those records.

### **Why Do We Need One?**

When a candidate for full initiation asks to be confirmed, the pastor of the parish in which Confirmation will be received needs to know that each candidate has indeed been baptized and not previously confirmed. We believe as Catholics that the sacraments are real and effective instruments of grace, not just symbols. The baptismal certificate with sacramental notations is one way we can make sure that each candidate has been prepared and can receive the graces of Confirmation validly.

To give a true example of why this matters, there was a young Catholic man in Cincinnati who desired to be married in the Church. He was asked to get a baptismal certificate with sacramental notations, and there wasn't one! Turns out, he had never been baptized, so he needed to receive Baptism before getting married in the Church. This may not happen to you, but that guy didn't think it would happen to him either!

### **How Do I Get One?**

Simple. Call or email your parish of Baptism and tell them you are seeking to be confirmed at St. Gertrude Church. Ask them for a "baptismal certificate with sacramental notations." The parish can mail it straight to us or to you (in which case you would share the copy with us).

### **Questions?**

Do you have any questions about baptisms in a non-Catholic setting, missing records, or sacraments received in another country? We can help you work through those details! Call Walter (contact info on next page) to get things started.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## **Why are there expectations for candidates outside of the formation events?**

St. Augustine wrote, "The God who created you without you will not save you without you" (St Augustine, Sermo 169, 13 [PL 38,923]). In Confirmation, we are offered a great gift. The question for all of us, including our Confirmation candidates is, "Are we willing to receive the grace God offers?" Our individual preparation elements are meant to help young people discern their willingness to be confirmed, enlist the help of spiritual mentors, and deepen their daily relationship with the Lord. While our events are meant to help support that readiness, each candidate should spend time outside of our monthly offerings in preparing for and assenting to this gift.

## **What if I can't come to some events?**

We understand that schedule conflicts and illness will prevent perfect attendance. For any missed meetings, there will be materials and resources for candidates and parents/sponsors to review and complete at home.

## **Do I have to choose a Confirmation name?**

In the Rite of Confirmation, the bishop will say, "\_\_\_\_\_, be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit." Each candidate will choose a name for the bishop to say, which will be entered into the sacramental register of the parish. That name can either be the candidate's baptismal name or it can be the name of a saint or beatified person from the history of the Church. Whatever name you choose, it should be a sign of your identity as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

## **What if my sponsor can't attend events for the Confirmation Mass?**

If a sponsor cannot attend the candidate-sponsor meeting, Confirmation rehearsal, or Confirmation Mass, you can still be confirmed! For the meetings, a parent can stand in. For the Mass, a "proxy" can stand in. This proxy must be over 16, a confirmed and practicing Catholic, and not a parent (the same requirements for a sponsor). If you will have a proxy at the Mass, please let us know. The proxy's name will be entered into the sacramental register along with the candidate's and sponsor's names

## **What if I can't come to the Confirmation Mass?**

If you cannot attend the Confirmation Mass, there are two possible alternatives: wait to be confirmed until the next year, or work with us to find a Confirmation Mass at a local parish that you could attend. Let us know as early as possible, as many parishes have Confirmation earlier in the year than our parish.

**If you have additional questions, please contact Walter Plummer, coordinator of youth formation, at [wplummer@stgertrude.org](mailto:wplummer@stgertrude.org) or (513) 561-8369, ext. 2122.**