

PERSONAL SPIRITUAL PLAN OVERVIEW:

PRAYER

Due April 7, 2025

What is a Personal Spiritual Plan?

A Personal Spiritual Plan (PSP) is a way for candidates, sponsors, and parents to:

1. Intentionally grow in relationship with Jesus Christ and his Church.
2. Have meaningful conversations about faith in Jesus and what it means to follow him.

Why are we doing PSPs as part of Confirmation Preparation?

First, because studies from the past twenty years have confirmed what the Church teaches: honest and loving conversations about faith with parents and other adult mentors are key to passing on the faith to our young people. Our PSPs are meant to help candidates, parents, and families have good conversations about life, faith, God, and the Church. (And practical experience has taught us that it helps adults, too!)

Second, because *talking about* God is really only helpful if we also *talk to* him. PSPs are designed to help you deepen not only your understanding, but also your lived experience of a relationship with Jesus Christ. This experience of relationship is what we call prayer.

How does a PSP work?

A PSP consists of at least four meetings, each focused on a different way to pray:

1. Praying with the Word of God: Encountering God in Sacred Scripture
2. Praying with Mary: The rosary and meditative prayer
3. Praying with Jesus in the Eucharist: Adoration and stillness
4. Praying at Home: Habits of prayer during daily life

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

What do we do at the meetings?

Each meeting includes prayer, something to read, watch, or listen to, and discussion. Keep reading for more details in our Meeting Guides.

Who should be involved?

We ask that at least three people participate:

- 1) one parent (both are welcome!)
- 2) the candidate's sponsor or another mentor in faith
- 3) The candidate (the 7th or 8th grader)

Because teen disciples learn from adult disciples, we ask that the parent(s) and sponsor/mentor each develop and share their own PSP along 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 follow [this link](#) or see our Confirmation webpage to access the simple form. All four logs are due on April 7, 2025.

PERSONAL SPIRITUAL PLAN MEETING GUIDE

PRE-MEETING – SET THE STAGE

Let's be real. This Personal Spiritual Plan thing might be a bit...different. To put it not so mildly, it might be weird, intimidating, and really challenging. The whole thing is about bringing something really personal, really important, and really vulnerable into the light along with two other people who are really close to you. We're going to ask you to pray separately and together, and then talk about your relationship with God and what it's like. Not what you think the pastor or your grandma want it to look like or what you think it *ought* to be like. What it IS like today.

For a lot of us, that's...different. So before you start, do a bit of a warmup. Here's how:

1. Pray about this. Sit in a quiet place and talk to God. Be honest with him about how you feel and what you think about these PSPs. If you think this is a really weird and embarrassing thing to do, tell him that. If you're kind of excited to talk to someone you really respect about important life stuff, tell him that. If you're not totally sure God is there and listening, tell him that. And then ask him to help you.
2. Candidates, write down 2-3 adults and one of your parents who you want to have real and honest conversations with this year. Write down why you've picked these adults.
3. Parents, look at this list with your candidate(s). Please don't judge it, revise it, or criticize it. Just observe it. Our hope is that this is a chance for your candidate to own his or her own path of discipleship, and that means some elements of real choice and freedom.
4. Candidates, call or meet up with the first adult on your list. Tell him or her why you're calling, why you thought of him or her specifically, and ask if that person would be willing to meet with you and your parent(s) about 4 times this year.
5. Set up the meeting times and locations. If this person is out of town, set up the virtual method of meeting. Send this document to your mentor, so he or she can prepare if needed.
6. After your mentor has said yes, write him or her a thank you note for the gift of his or her time.

Finally, this outline is supposed to be like a springboard: it's meant to help you launch these conversations well. But don't feel like you're obligated to march through everything we've put in here. This PSP process is about YOUR relationship with God. Not the pastor's or your Confirmation leaders'. If you get stuck on a topic or are more interested in one part than another, spend more time there. The best thing you can do is pay attention to the fruits of the Holy Spirit in these conversations. When do you experience peace, love, joy, hope, kindness, generosity, more self-control, more faithfulness because of these conversations? Those are indicators of God's presence in your life. Where do you experience the opposites of those? Those are signs of operating outside of God's presence in your life. Pay attention to the signs.

We're praying for you as you start out this great adventure!

MEETING 1 – PRAYING WITH THE WORD OF GOD

Have you ever wanted God just to speak to you? Good news: he does. Every day. One of the main ways we hear him is his Word – the Bible. That’s great, but it can take some practice to learn how to listen for what he’s saying, especially when the words or situations feel foreign or distant from your daily life. In this first meeting, we want you to experience for yourself how God’s Word, while ancient, is also speaking to you right now.

Meeting Objectives:

- Talk about what prayer really means.
- Talk about how to pray with Scripture.
- Make a specific goal to continue praying with Scripture for a time.

Who should be there:

- Candidate, Parent, Mentor

What to bring:

- This outline
- 3 Bibles
- The Catechism of the Catholic Church ([online here](#))

What to do in the meeting:

- Check in: This meeting is all about you guys. So how are you? Ask a fun question. (Example: When you were in 7th/8th grade, who were your closest friends? What stressed you out most? What was the most exciting part of your typical week? Who was your biggest crush?)
- Story time: Take time for each person to share a story about one or more of the following.
 - Have you ever had an amazing or powerful prayer experience? What happened? What was it like?
 - Have you ever had a particular prayer answered?
 - Have you ever had a difficult moment or season of life in prayer?
- Read the Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraphs 2559–2565.
 - Does one of these definitions of prayer stand out to you? Why?
 - 2560 says that Jesus seeks us out first, even before we seek him. What’s your response when you hear that? Why would he do that?
 - 2563 gives us an understanding of the “heart.” How is this similar to or different from other ways people talk about the “heart”?
 - 2564 & 2565 call prayer a “relationship.” How would you explain that to someone who doesn’t know much about God or church?
- Pray with the Bible: This is a helpful order to follow.
 - Open your Bible to Luke 11:1-4 (that’s the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 11, Verses 1-4).
 - Jesus has sent us his Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth, to comfort and guide us. Invite the Holy Spirit to guide you. Use this prayer or another you know: “Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and kindle in them the fire of your love.”
 - Read the Scripture passage out loud slowly one time.

- Take a minute in silence to see what stood out to you. Ask the Holy Spirit, "What are you speaking to me?" Be attentive to any word or phrase that your mind snags on.
- Read the passage out loud one more time. Ask the Holy Spirit the same question. Pay attention to those "mental snags."
- Discussion:
 - What stood out to you in this passage? Why? (Take some time to dive into this if you've got more to say or ask!)
 - Do you think Jesus is saying the Our Father is the only way to pray? How might other forms of prayer relate to the Our Father?
 - Have you prayed with Scripture much before? If so, what do you usually do? If not, what do you think about it?
 - What are some of the challenges you can think of when it comes to praying with Sacred Scripture? What are some of the good things about it?
 - For someone who's new to praying with Scripture, are there any good parts to start with?
- Go back to the "Meeting Objectives": did you do what you set out to do?
- Set a SMART Goal (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-related) and log it [here](#).
 - How can you continue to pray with Scripture between now and your next meeting? (Example goal: I will set aside 10 minutes at the beginning of the day to pray with the Gospel of Mark.)
- Set the time and day of your next meeting! Shoot for 2-4 weeks in the future.
- Close in prayer
 - Pray out loud together in your own words.
 - If you need it, a helpful format for this kind of prayer is the ACTS acronym:
 - Adoration (say out loud who God is: "God, you are so good.")
 - Contrition (acknowledge that you are in need of his mercy: "You are so patient with us and you love us so much. Forgive us for our bad choices and the habits those create.")
 - Thanksgiving (Thank him! "God, you have given us so many gifts. Thank you for ____.")
 - Supplication (Ask for his help: "God, I want to be more who you made me to be. Please help me ____.")

MEETING 2 – PRAYING WITH MARY

Whether you've prayed the Rosary many times or never picked it up, in this meeting we want to invite you to take one more step in understanding and practicing this beautiful form of prayer.

Meeting Objectives:

- Talk about Mary and our relationship with her.
- Talk about and pray the Rosary.
- Make a specific goal to continue praying the Rosary for a time.

Who should be there:

- Candidate, Parent, Mentor

What to bring:

- This outline
- 3 Rosaries (find a free one in the back of the church if needed!)

What to do in the meeting:

- Check in: Ask for highs and lows and talk about your SMART Goal from the last meeting.
- Story time: Take time for each person to share a story about one or more of the following.
 - Tell mom stories: something funny/unique and ways you see how much she loves you.
 - What's a meaningful gift your mother has given you? What do you appreciate about it?
 - Have you prayed the Rosary much before? What did/do you think about it?
- Read and discuss the questions below, and then return to the proposed answer to hear more.
 - Q: Why are we talking about Mary? Isn't this supposed to be about prayer?
 - A: Catholics focus on Mary in our spiritual lives in a special way because God has given her a special place in the story of salvation: she is the mother of the Son of God Incarnate, Jesus Christ. Mary was (and is) close to him in a way no other person has ever been, having carried him in her womb, lived her whole life with him, and been assumed body and soul into heaven to be with him forever. To pray is to be like and with Mary in being close to Jesus, and to be with Mary is to learn how to pray.
 - Q: What's a good way to think about Mary?
 - A: When we think about our relationship with Mary, we use the term "devotion." That's different from the word "adoration" we use when talking about worship given to God. Devotion means that Mary helps us to know Jesus better. Adoration means we treat Jesus as the highest and most important of all because Jesus is God. Mary is a member of the Church, not a goddess separate from or above it. The Church calls her our spiritual mother. On the cross, Jesus explicitly gave his "beloved disciple" into the care of his mother, and in doing so gave us as his brothers and sisters in God's family into her care as well. Because Mary is in heaven, we can actually pray to Mary and ask for her help as our spiritual mother. This help always comes from Jesus and points us back to him, but it is often God's way to involve his children in his saving plan. He brings Mary into his saving work in a special way as the mother of Jesus and his Church.
 - Q: Do we have to have a devotion to Mary?

MEETING 3 – PRAYING TO JESUS IN THE EUCHARIST

The Eucharist is the greatest gift Jesus has given us. It is his whole self, Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity – his True Presence. In Adoration, we can see Jesus in the Eucharist right before our eyes. It's a chance to sit in his presence. This meeting is a chance to talk about the gifts and challenges of Adoration, and try it for yourself.

Meeting Objectives:

- Talk about the Eucharist and Adoration.
- Go to Adoration.
- Make a specific goal to visit the Adoration Chapel again.

Who should be there:

- Candidate, Parent, Mentor

What to bring:

- This outline
- The Catechism of the Catholic Church ([online here](#))

What to do in the meeting:

- Check in: Ask for highs and lows and talk about your SMART Goal from the last meeting.
- Story time: Take time for each person to share a story about one or more of the following.
 - A time you met or saw a celebrity. What was it like? Why do you think people like meeting celebrities?
 - If Jesus appeared to you face to face today, what would your response be?
- Read the Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraphs 1373–1381, and discuss the following:
 - What are some of the ways Jesus is present to his Church? What is unique about his real presence in the Eucharist?
 - Jesus' presence in the Eucharist has been a hot button topic in Church discussions for hundreds of years. Where are you with your belief in the real presence of Jesus? Why is that? (It's ok to be honest if you struggle with this belief! It's also ok if you don't find it hard to believe!)
 - Many people do struggle with the teaching that Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist. Why do you think that is? Why do you think the Church stands so firmly on this belief?
 - Paragraph 1380 says, "The Church and the world have a great need for Eucharistic worship." Why do you think that might be?
 - In Adoration, people sit quietly, sing, read, pray the Rosary, or just talk to Jesus. What do you think the benefits of that kind of prayer might be? What kind of obstacles or challenges do you think people might experience in Adoration?
- Go to Adoration.
 - Pick a time and a place to go to Eucharistic Adoration. Our parish has Adoration available most days from 7:30am–9pm in the Mother of Mercy Adoration Chapel. Other parishes and retreat centers will also offer perpetual or special Adoration times as well – feel free to find a time and location that works well for you! If you can attend together, that's great. If not, it's more important that you just go!

- Tips for Adoration: If you're new to this practice, shoot for 15–30 minutes. Many people will sit for an hour. Bring along a Bible, Rosary, spiritual book, or journal to help you to pray. At some point in your time, take some moments of silence. As you do, notice what comes to your mind: images, feelings, phrases, or people. These are often the ways that God speaks to us.
- Discussion:
 - What did you think about Adoration? Did anything stand out to you?
 - Was there anything you liked? Anything that was hard?
 - What did you think about the silence and stillness?
- Go back to the "Meeting Objectives": did you do what you set out to do?
- Set a SMART Goal (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-related) and log it [here](#).
 - How can you go to Adoration between now and your next meeting?
- Set the time and day of your next meeting! Shoot for 2-4 weeks in the future.
- Close in prayer: Remember to use your own words as part of it!

MEETING 4 – PRAYING AT HOME

Our homes have a special priority in our lives. The average person spends about 17 out of 24 hours a day there. Home is (hopefully) the place we feel safest, most ourselves, most known. We start and end our days there. We sleep and eat there. So if our deepest happiness is found in a living and loving relationship with Jesus in all parts of our lives, and our homes are such an important part of our lives, we should talk about prayer at home. This meeting is all about ways to do that.

Meeting Objectives:

- Talk about prayer at home.
- Make a specific goal to form a habit of prayer at home.

Who should be there:

- Candidate, Parent, Mentor

What to bring:

- This outline
- The Catechism of the Catholic Church ([online here](#))

What to do in the meeting:

- Check in: Ask for highs and lows and talk about your SMART Goal from the last meeting.
- Story time: Take time for each person to share a story about one or more of the following.
 - What do you most like about your home? Why?
 - Are there any other homes you like to go to? (Ex: your friend's, your grandma's, etc.) Why?
- Discuss the following questions. Share any stories that come up as you talk! And follow some rabbit holes if you come across them - it's better to have a good conversation than just march through.
 - Do you have any daily/weekly habits of prayer at home? What are they? What do you like most about them? Is there anything challenging about them?
 - Let's play devil's advocate: why not just pray in church and leave home for daily life?
 - Are some places better than others to pray at your home? Do you have any places you like to pray? Do you have a space devoted to prayer at home, or any sacred images/prayer tools (rosaries, books, etc.)? If so, what does it look like? If not, what are your thoughts about one? (There could be good reasons for or against one!)
 - When do you like to pray at home? Are there some times that are better or worse than others? How long do you spend in prayer? Is there a time that is too long? Too short?
 - Read the Catechism of the Catholic Church 1655–1658 and 2685 and share one thing that stands out to you.
 - 2685 says that "The Christian family is the first place of education in prayer." How does your family currently pray together? What do you appreciate about that? Are there any challenges? Are there other ways you would like to pray together? Share your ideas with one another.
- Go back to the "Meeting Objectives": did you do what you set out to do?
- Set a SMART Goal (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-related) and log it [here](#).

- How will you focus on praying at home this week? When, where, and how will you pray each day? What images or aids would be helpful for you? (Think candle, journal, Bible, crucifix, etc.) Don't be afraid to adapt over time to figure out what works best for you!
- There are no more meetings, but that doesn't mean these conversations have to end!
- Close in prayer: Remember to use your own words as part of it!