



ARCHDIOCESE
OF SEATTLE

**Preparing
Catholic
Young People
for
CONFIRMATION**

A Parish Source Book

includes

Archdiocesan Policies for Adolescent Confirmation

**Best Practices for Inviting, Welcoming and Forming
Adolescents Seeking To Grow in the
Baptismal Way of Life at Confirmation**

and

A Parish Model for Adolescent Confirmation Preparation

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November 27, 2011
First Sunday of Advent

The Advocate, the Holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name—he will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you.

John 14:26

Dear Friends in Christ,

Jesus' words in the Gospel of John wonderfully anticipate the gift of the Holy Spirit that would be given to the Church at Pentecost, the same gift imparted to all who receive the Sacrament of Confirmation today.

I am pleased to present *Preparing Catholic Young People for Confirmation: A Parish Source Book for the Archdiocese of Seattle*. This resource incorporates current Archdiocesan Confirmation Guidelines with new parish best practices, a religious education curriculum specific to the sacrament, and a comprehensive vision of what it means to be a young Catholic. While specific Confirmation guidelines and policies remain unchanged, they are framed within the context of Catholic identity and Christian Initiation. Greater emphasis is given to intentional and systematic catechesis in preparing young people to receive the sacrament by providing a firm foundation in the Catholic faith.

We share a responsibility for inviting, teaching, forming and supporting young people as they take this important step in their journey of faith. Recognizing that the gift of the Holy Spirit they will receive in Confirmation is the completion and perfection of the grace of Baptism and their full sacramental sharing in the Paschal Mystery, we understand how important preparation for Confirmation is.

The most important aspect of any sacramental preparation is that we help dispose the candidates, using a variety of methods, to receive the grace God will give them in the sacrament. We want them to thirst for this grace and understand what the Holy Spirit is about to do for them.

I am grateful to all who have contributed to this important effort, most especially the Offices of Catholic Faith Formation, Youth and Young Adult Ministry, Liturgy and Stewardship. Special thanks go to the Very Reverend Michael J. McDermott, Pastor of St. Charles Borromeo Parish, Tacoma; Dr. Anne Frederick, Director of Religious Education; and Jer Carrasco, MAPS, Seattle University School of Theology and Ministry, whose collaboration resulted in this comprehensive resource. Most of all, I thank those with direct responsibility for preparing our young people for Confirmation, for you give witness daily to your living relationship with Christ, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, in the Catholic Church.

Recognizing that this *Source Book* is in many ways a living document, I am pleased to give it my provisional approval. As we have time to reflect on its use and our entire practice of sacramental preparation, I might suggest some revisions or updating.

With every best wish and prayer, I am

Sincerely in Christ,

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Most Rev. J. Peter Sartain
Archbishop of Seattle

Preface

“Parents, educators and others have such a vital role in helping young people to stretch themselves, to discover their abilities, to test their limits.

Indeed, whatever we can do to enable people to find and utilize their potential is a form of sacred activity.”

Reclaim the Fire
Rev. Martin Pable

Being Catholic is not something we *do*, it is something we *are*. When we invite our young people to grow in the baptismal way of life—which is what we are doing at Confirmation—we are asking them to claim their place in the Eucharistic community so they can help bring about God’s kingdom—a way of forgiveness, justice, peace and love. At the same time, as faithful Catholics, we are showing them what it means to *be* Catholic by surrounding them in a community of love and sharing the wonderfully rich experiences, traditions and teachings of our faith.

When we do these things we offer young people a glimpse of what it is like to be part of a community where one lives beyond one’s self; what it feels like to be a certain type of person—a person who believes in Jesus and desires to follow His way. And, if we have even a small amount of success, we can imagine Confirming young people who love being Catholic and, even though they are still in the process of learning how to articulate what this means in theological terms, might say things like:

“I go to Mass every week because it makes me feel good about myself and it’s one way I thank God for all He’s done for me.”

“I have the outfit I wore at my Baptism and the rosary my godparents gave me at my first Holy Communion. My Grandma taught me how to pray it—it is our special time together.”

“In the weeks leading up to Christmas we take turns lighting the candles on our Advent wreath, the one we make together as a family after Mass. I know I’m probably too old for this, but it is part of what makes Christmas, Christmas. I want to do this some day with my own children.”

“There is a Wednesday, sometime late in winter, when I go to church and ashes are smeared on my forehead. I don’t always know exactly why I’m there but I can’t imagine not going.”

“I remember the times I’ve gone with my Dad to deliver food to St. Vincent de Paul. It is always around Thanksgiving and I like knowing we are making sure another family will have a turkey dinner.”

This is what it can mean to *be* Catholic. We are called to help our young people know and feel how being Catholic is about being a certain kind of person—the kind of person they were created to be—the kind of person they *want* to be. It means helping them know, claim and love the beautiful faith tradition which is theirs.

Introduction

“From the time of the apostles, becoming a Christian has been accomplished by a journey and initiation in several stages—so as we invite young people to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, we must help them recognize and accept the responsibility of fully belonging to, and supporting, the Catholic Church.”

United States Catholic Catechism for Catholic Adults

Guided by the belief catechesis is an initiation and apprenticeship of the entire Christian life, and preparation for adolescent Confirmation offers a unique opportunity for forming Catholic young people who understand what it means to know and follow the Risen Christ as faithful disciples, grateful stewards and active evangelists, the Office of Catholic Faith Formation in October 2008 began a review of adolescent Confirmation preparation guidelines.

The goal of this undertaking was to clarify existing Archdiocesan policies for adolescent Confirmation and to develop a resource that robustly and consistently serves parish leadership—presenting an adolescent Confirmation preparation process that is inviting, welcoming and supportive of young people.

***Preparing Catholic Young People for Confirmation: A Parish Source Book* encourages a larger vision of what it means to be a young Catholic and positions Confirmation within the broader context of Christian initiation and Catholic identity.** It visions adolescent Confirmation as an opportunity to define, teach and model what it means to be a fully initiated Catholic so young people may experience deeper levels of joyful acceptance as part of a responsive and loving faith community. It also encourages their questions about Christ and His Church as they seek to discover the truths of His teaching.

The information presented reflects conversations with Archdiocesan and parish leadership; a review of historical trends, data, and resources pertaining to adolescent Confirmation in the Archdiocese of Seattle; and the adolescent Confirmation protocols of several U.S. Archdioceses (Baltimore, Cincinnati, Dubuque, Houston-Galveston, Indianapolis and Los Angeles). While not exhaustive, this research informs accomplishments, goals and opportunities for adolescent Confirmation today and provides a model of preparation more responsive to the parishes we serve.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- 1. Sacramental policies already in place.** A framework exists for adolescent Confirmation preparation supported by approved policies and guidelines. A logical next step is building upon these by offering best practices to clarify, define and address inconsistencies.
- 2. Responsive and supportive leadership.** Archdiocesan and parish leadership expressed enthusiasm for developing and recommending additional adolescent Confirmation resources for parishes. They also encouraged strengthening formation for parish Confirmation coordinators, youth ministers and catechists.
- 3. Excellent resources available.** The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' list of approved resources for adolescent Confirmation offers parishes a number of excellent options readily adaptable to a variety of parish settings.
- 4. Solid and successful models to emulate.** The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults and the Annual Catholic Appeal formation programs offer models of proven success for reaching and serving parish leadership. Adopting a similarly guided approach for adolescent Confirmation preparation by providing pastors and parish ministers with timelines and templates can greatly enhance efforts to invite, welcome, and support young people.

GOALS

- 1. Enroll all eligible young people in a Confirmation preparation process.** Parishes are encouraged to locate and/or invite *all* baptized Catholic youth, especially those attending public and private non-Catholic schools, to begin Confirmation preparation.
- 2. Continue to inform and clarify Archdiocesan guidelines and policies for adolescent Confirmation preparation so they are fully received and understood.**
 - A.** In some areas more precise language and additional formation of leadership is needed to bring guidelines and policies to life.
 - B.** The formation of leadership for adolescent catechesis and youth ministry is also uneven in quality and efforts can be improved to invite and secure experienced and certified sacramental preparation ministers.
 - C.** Offering formation, best practices and resources can aid parish ministers in providing comprehensive and effective Confirmation preparation which fulfills Archdiocesan policies and guidelines.

- 3. Ensure those being Confirmed attain a basic knowledge and understanding of what it means to be Catholic.**

Parishes emphasize immediate preparation—six to eight sessions of formation specific to the sacrament. However, knowledge and understanding of the faith begins in remote and proximate periods of formation and cannot be solved in immediate formation. Parents are to be made aware of the expectations which parallel Christian Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist) and the necessity for ongoing, systematic catechesis.

OPPORTUNITIES

- 1. Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist together constitute the sacraments of Christian Initiation and this unity is to be safeguarded.**

All sacramental preparation is an opportunity to help the faithful better appreciate how each sacrament is necessary for informing and positioning initiatory catechesis as an apprenticeship of the entire Christian life. We can better mark for our young people and their parents—especially those baptized as infants and maturing in faith through a gradual process of formation—a clearly defined path connecting Baptism with Confirmation and Eucharist.

- 2. The most fruitful preparation is that in which the entire parish faith community is involved in inviting, welcoming and modeling Christian discipleship.**

- A.** The Catechumenate model encourages the full and active participation of the parish community in sharing significant moments in a candidates' faith journey. By naming, defining, and making real the essential components and best practices of a well thought out Confirmation preparation process we better connect young people (and their parents, sponsors, families, etc.) with their parish faith community who can model what it means to be Catholic and to live as faithful disciples, grateful stewards and active evangelists.
- B.** Faith and life skills can be integrated into the preparation process making it more relevant and meaningful to young people. Parish Confirmation coordinators can provide young people the spiritual depth and formation they need to make good life decisions. As one youth minister says: "We seek to take our young people more deeply into their faith, more authentically into relationship with others, and more vibrantly into this vital period of catechesis."

TO BE A *YOUNG* CATHOLIC

To Be a *Young Catholic*

“People live out of abiding identities. When moments of special choice arrive, people tend to make their decisions almost automatically. For in a certain sense the really important decision has long since been made. We need to speak from the heart about why our values are important to us—why we espouse a particular way of life .”

Making Disciples
Timothy E. O’Connell

What does it mean to be Catholic? This question is foundational not only for adult believers, but also for young people seeking fuller initiation in the Catholic faith at Confirmation. When we say, “I’m Christian” and “I’m Catholic” we have a responsibility, both individually and collectively, to understand what we mean. To do this we need to know what we believe and why we believe it.

The priests of the Archdiocese of Seattle, as part of the Catholic Identity Project, offer the following as distinguishing one as *Catholic*:

“A Catholic Christian is someone who is united to all people through a sharing of similar hopes and fears, joys and sorrows; someone who shares with Jews and Muslims a belief in One God; and someone who embraces the way of life revealed by Jesus Christ—the way of agape love.

A Catholic embraces Christ’s way of life as a member of a larger community which is the Catholic Church—uniquely hierarchical, sacramental and universal in nature.

As Catholics we have a focused and integrated way of Seeing, Celebrating and Living life as faithful disciples, grateful stewards and active evangelists of the *Risen Christ*.”

Being Catholic then, begins within a large community of believers who share belief in one God and in God’s only son, Jesus. As part of this faith community Catholics come to know Jesus and make a conscious decision to follow his Way as faithful disciples, grateful stewards and active evangelists.

Young people welcomed into the Catholic faith community at Baptism and introduced to Jesus in their families, parish and/or school communities, are called to grow in discipleship.

They are meant to know more deeply and personally what Jesus taught and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, more actively participate in the life of the Church (through prayer, worship, service, etc.).

This call may come at a time when young people are experiencing physical and emotional changes, as well as confronting numerous cultural challenges that can have significant implications for faith development, including: “heightened individualism and pervasive commercialism; the blandishments of mass marketing; and a pop culture milieu saturated with violence and hyper-sexuality,” (*Source Book on Adolescent Catechesis: Vol. 1*, p. 43). One consequence of this can be that traditional patterns of authority—including religious authority—are diminished. Indeed, a large number of young people, while still identifying themselves as “Catholic,” have little understanding of what this means and are weakly connected to the institutional Church, (*Source Book on Adolescent Catechesis: Volume 1*, p. 47).

Given this situation, how does being Catholic offer young people something meaningful for their lives today? What are ways of affirming for them the value of the Catholic Church’s communal, ecclesial, and sacramental dimensions? How can we help them discover and responsibly practice the teachings, traditions and rituals central to the Catholic faith? How can we guide them in making responsible choices that add to their overall happiness and well-being?

We have an opportunity in preparing young people for Confirmation to *show* them—perhaps for the first time—*what* is distinctive about being Catholic, *why* it matters and *how* “the strengthening in grace effected by Confirmation empowers them to assume the full duties of the Christian life” (*Receive the Gift*, p. 5).

FAITHFUL DISCIPLESHIP

“YOUR MISSION, SHOULD YOU
CHOOSE TO ACCEPT IT. . .”

With these words the story’s hero or heroine is challenged to attempt what sounds impossible. The call to faithful discipleship is similar—it is an *invitation*. We are free to choose whether or not to accept it. However, if we do, we too will be sent on a seemingly impossible mission—but one we know can and is being accomplished by the very real life heroes we find in Scripture and in the history of our Church and world.

When we invite our baptized young people to be Confirmed in the Catholic faith we are asking them to embrace a life of faithful discipleship and to participate more fully in the life, mission and work of the Church. We are calling them—as those who believe in Jesus—to know what he taught and, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to embrace their individual giftedness in ways which will make a positive difference in their own life and in the lives of others.

Indeed, the totality of the Church’s efforts is to make disciples (*General Directory for Catechesis*, No. 73). What does this mean? What are we asking of our young people as they continue to mature in their faith? We are asking them to *choose* to live as Christ lived—in intimate relationship with God, the Father, and in loving service to their neighbor. **We are encouraging and helping them to knowingly and lovingly say: “I believe in the Risen Christ and accept him as my Lord and savior; I want to be in a personal relationship with him. I want to follow his Way.” It is to these things we as a Catholic community of faith are attending; it is to these things we are witnessing.**

Young people preparing for Confirmation are especially being called to follow Jesus by fuller participation in a group that embodies his Way. This means being invited and welcomed into the life of their parish faith community and joining other faithful disciples in worship, study, prayer and service.

However, *making* disciples, like *being* disciples, is challenging. We can help our young people in their mission by reminding them they are never alone. The Holy Spirit is ever prompting and guiding them to embrace their unique giftedness and be more than they believe themselves capable.

In inviting, welcoming and preparing young people for a life of discipleship we—as Church—are calling them to conversion and committing ourselves to helping them listen to the workings of the Holy Spirit in their lives. We are saying, with love and confidence: “We will be here *with* you and *for* you as guides and companions as you make important life decisions.”

When Confirming adolescents, the years leading up to celebration of the sacrament offer a unique opportunity to nurture maturing discipleship by modeling our Catholic faith and helping young people, together with their parents and sponsors, grow as faithful disciples and active members of a welcoming parish community.

“They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the community life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers.”

Acts 2:42

GRATEFUL STEWARDSHIP

A *Catholic* is someone who understands stewardship as an expression of discipleship and as the personal responsibility of each of the baptized.

In forming young people as mature disciples we are not only concerned with making them lifelong learners and companions of the *Risen* Christ, but equally in showing them how to live out Christ’s teachings through a generosity of heart. **A faithful disciple is a grateful steward who regards all he or she is and possesses as gift and blessing, and understands the need to share such gifts and blessings with others to help bring about God’s kingdom.**

Young people preparing for Confirmation are to be formed as grateful stewards who know what it means to live in communion with Christ Jesus and, at the prompting of the Holy Spirit, strive to return all gifts to the Father *with an increase* (Matthew 25:14—30).

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Pastoral Letter, *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, defines stewardship as "the work of the Spirit in our lives." **When we accept our lives as sheer gift, the Spirit can use us as apt instruments for spreading the Gospel.** Such an understanding helps us better appreciate stewardship as the personal responsibility of each of the baptized and how it can lead young people to a more mature understanding of their lives as followers of the *Risen* Christ.

The time leading up to a young person's decision to be Confirmed in the Catholic faith is for becoming more aware of the demands and rewards of discipleship. **We are most concerned with creating and fostering a formation process which promotes *conversion*—an experience of *the heart*.** And, as conversion is ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit, we humbly pray in presenting the life and teachings of Jesus that young people experience "a change of mind and heart that is expressed not in a single action, nor even a number of actions over a period of time, but in an entire way of life," (*USCCB Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*).

The preparation and support we provide young people as they journey toward Confirmation can be an especially good time for exploring personal strengths and gifts and ways of sharing these with others. In modeling faithful discipleship as a grateful steward we have an opportunity to change the way young people understand and live their lives (see also Appendix 8).

ACTIVE EVANGELIZING

A *Catholic* is someone who knows the teachings and practices of the faith and is able, through word and action, to give witness to Christ by sharing and living these principles and values in everyday life to the best of their understanding and ability.

To be baptized in the Catholic faith is to be "baptized into Christ," to "put on Christ." The Catholic Church teaches all the baptized has a vocation, a unique way in which they are to grow in holiness and help spread the Good News, "HE IS RISEN!" Catholics actively witness to the *Risen* Christ by living distinctively *Christian* lives. In worship, prayer and service, they spread the message: "God loves the world, gave his Son for the salvation of the world, and invites all humankind to eternal happiness."

When evangelizing to young people it is often more what we *do* than what we *say* that has the greatest impact. **Therefore, a Confirmation**

"Central to our identity as Catholics is that we are called to be leaven for transforming the world, agents for bringing about a kingdom of love and justice. When we pray, *Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*, we are praying for the coming of God's kingdom and committing ourselves to breaking down the barriers that obstruct God's kingdom of justice and peace and to working to bring about a world more respectful of life and dignity."

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops
Statement on Sharing Catholic Social Teaching

preparation journey centered around *doing* in imitation of Christ is more likely to produce the Christian attitude and behavior we seek. The odds for accomplishing this are even greater when we directly associate what we are doing with what Jesus taught thereby demonstrating how our actions as Christians give witness to what we believe and value.

A particularly meaningful way of doing this is connecting what we are asking our young people to *be* and *do* with the teachings and practices of Catholic social tradition. **We can help them better understand and model for them what it means to say: "I'm *Catholic*—I choose life; I serve the least among us; I hunger and thirst for justice; I am a peacemaker."** When we do this we are inviting them to a life of integrity, compassion, responsibility and concern for others. Even more, we become witnesses who *love* being Catholic and inspire them to join us in spreading the Good News of God's saving love.

In helping young people mature as disciples we want them to recall their baptismal promises and embrace their vocational calling. Again, the immediate years and months leading up to Confirmation are especially good for showing young people what it means to *be Catholic*. It is a time for inviting young people into fuller communion with the Christian community; for worshiping, praying and serving—side-by-side—helping them grow in relationship with Jesus and each other.

CHRISTIAN INITIATION

Christian Initiation

**“Catechesis is an initiation
and apprenticeship in the
entire Christian life.”**

General Directory for Catechesis

From the beginning, initiation has been a *first step* in the process of becoming a Christian. The earliest Christian communities began such a process as a way of preparing would-be followers of the *Risen* Christ for a life of discipleship. A person desiring to follow Christ would make their request before a community of believers. The Christian community would then take time to examine the individual’s motives to make sure they understood what they were asking—cautioning them that not everyone is able to accept the teachings of Jesus and follow his Way. Only after prayerful discernment would a new member be accepted into *the process* of initiation and catechesis.

In this sense, the first step in becoming a Christian can be viewed as both invitational and transformational. A believer responding to God’s grace and desiring to become a faithful follower of Jesus is *invited* to become a member of a community that embodies that faith. They make a personal choice to adopt the behaviors of discipleship and begin a process of catechesis meant to *transform* their very lives.

As we consider ways of inviting young people to complete their Christian initiation and how best to form them in the way of Jesus, it is good to remember these elements of *choice* and *community*. The choice, however, is not whether a young person will participate in this or that experience. It is, more importantly, if they will choose to *believe*—and, believing, will they find in their parish faith community the instruction, guidance and support they need to continue on their spiritual journey?

Opening one’s heart and mind to God is the center of initiation. Confirmation invites young people welcomed into the Catholic community at Baptism and being fed at the Eucharistic table to continue their faith journey and increasingly demonstrate the behaviors of faithful discipleship.

Such conversion and transformation do not occur by accident. They are the result of an intentional and well-planned process. This process begins at

Baptism and continues systematically throughout life as one receives the Gospel message and, as part of a Christian community, commits to **Seeing, Celebrating, and Living** the Good News.

THE BAPTISMAL CATECHUMENATE

The Baptismal Catechumenate inspires the adolescent Confirmation preparation journey as it inspires all catechesis in the Church.

Archdiocesan Policy calls for adolescent Confirmation preparation to model the *Rite of Christian Initiation* so as to lead young people to more deeply seek the living God and continue the faith and conversion experience that began at their Baptism. It understands Confirmation best in its relationship with Baptism and Eucharist, which together constitute the sacraments of Christian initiation.

Here Confirmation marks one stage of initiation celebrating our common baptismal life, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and a gradual and continual growth into the Eucharistic community. As stated in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Confirmation is the sacrament which:

- **Increases and deepens the grace of Baptism.**
- **Strengthens the baptismal conferral of the Holy Spirit.**
- **Incorporates us more firmly in Christ—cementing our bond with the Church, associating us more closely with the Church’s mission, increasing in us the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and helping us bear witness to the Christian faith in words and deeds.**

Confirmation is the sacrament which unites with Baptism and Eucharist to form us in our Catholic identity. **And, in preparing for Confirmation, the Catechumenate model necessarily assumes systematic and age-appropriate prayer, worship and catechesis has occurred in the years prior to undertaking this leg of one’s faith journey.**

SYSTEMATIC CATECHESIS

When Confirming adolescents, celebration of the sacrament ideally follows a period of faith formation which systematically presents the core teachings of Jesus and our Catholic faith and identity. Young people baptized into the Catholic faith as infants and welcomed to the table of the Lord at or beyond the age of seven, are now invited to choose for themselves a life of Christian discipleship. Such a life-altering decision—if it is to be life altering—requires love, knowledge and a desire to grow in relationship with Christ and be a faithful member of the Church he founded.

The years following Baptism and celebration of first Eucharist are a time for introducing our children to Jesus, learning Sacred Scripture, and presenting the essential teachings and practices of the Catholic faith. Year by year as parents, teachers—as *Church*—we mark the path of our children’s faith journey by:

- helping them grow in relationship with the Lord by presenting the doctrinal content of catechetical instruction gradually and in a manner appropriate to their age;
- praying, worshipping, helping others—doing the many rich and compelling things *Catholics* do so that *being Catholic* defines who they are; and
- traveling with our children on their faith journey equipping them to continue on themselves.

These years of what is traditionally known as *remote* and *proximate* catechesis are a time for instructing and celebrating our Catholic faith with our children. In so doing, we are helping to form young *Catholics* who love God and for whom Jesus is central to their life.

“The work of catechesis is to proclaim Christ’s message, to participate in efforts to develop community, to lead people to worship and prayer, and to motivate them to serve others.”

National Directory for Catechesis

SACRAMENTAL CATECHESIS

The sacrament of Confirmation marks one stage of Christian initiation. After a period of faithful study and active practice of the Christian faith, young people are invited by their parish faith community to begin a process of formation specific to the sacrament itself.

Expressing a belief in God and a desire to follow Jesus—with a good understanding of what Jesus taught and the beliefs and practices of the Catholic faith—young people come together in fellowship and service to better understand the Rite of Confirmation through tradition, scripture and symbol. During this time relationships are supported and strengthened and special attention is given to involving sponsors, parents, friends, family and the full parish community.

Sacramental catechesis is a time of *focused preparation* when young people are called to a deeper personal relationship with the *Risen Christ as lived in community.* As a parish family, we show our young people how the Holy Spirit is working in their lives and help them to listen to the voice of God calling them to grow as faithful disciples, grateful stewards and active evangelists.

ADOLESCENT CATECHESIS

Adolescence is defined as the period of life from the onset of puberty to the beginning of adulthood. **The decision to Confirm adolescents reflects the expectation that, at this age, Catholic young people are better able to make a well-informed commitment to assume the individual and communal responsibilities that come with full Christian initiation.**

The goal of adolescent catechesis is to form young people into disciples who believe in Jesus, know what he taught, and who have been integrated into the faith life of their parish and the wider Church. Hence, the question becomes: how can we, through engaging and effective catechesis, help young people better understand the Church’s prayer and worship and become active participants in it? (*Source Book on Adolescent Catechesis, Vol. I, p. 4.*)

A large part of this is appreciating how catechesis is a permanent school of the faith which follows major stages in life—adolescence being one of them. In catechizing adolescents we should not expect them to *be* or *do* more than what is appropriate at this stage of their faith journey.

Adolescent Catechesis, cont.—

At the same time, we can and should pursue and promote catechesis which combines creativity and systematic planning so our efforts lead young people closer to God and help them recognize, appreciate and develop their special gifts in a way which best serves and pleases the Lord. This is especially relevant in the immediate years and months leading up to the decision to be Confirmed.

The *General Directory for Catechesis* states that the principle task for catechesis for this age group is to help them develop a “genuinely Christian understanding of life.” Effective approaches include catechesis on special themes, group projects and activities, membership in youth groups, and retreat experiences which invite the active participation of parents and the entire faith community as appropriate. This is to be accomplished within a setting which is first and foremost sensitive to the social and cultural needs of the young people to whom we are ministering.

Therefore, our efforts rightly focus on conversion as we faithfully instruct young people in the *Catholic* faith so they may:

- come to know love;
- be exposed to a new way of life through relationships with Christians—including peers and adults;
- hear the Gospel and be inspired to explore its implications for their own lives;
- be initiated through the sacraments and catechesis;
- participate in the life of the community, most significantly at weekly Eucharist; and
- commit to continuing the Church’s mission by sharing their unique gifts in loving service.

—*Source Book on Adolescent Catechesis: Vol. I*

“Those who work with young people know the importance of methodology in discipleship formation. We need only look at the ultimate model himself, Jesus Christ, to see that it is not just what we teach but how we teach it and live it that is of supreme importance.”

**Adolescent Sourcebook on Catechesis
Volume I**

**CATECHESIS FOR
ADOLESCENTS SHOULD:**

1. Take into account their physical, social and psychological development.
2. Present the words and example of Jesus and the saints in ways that appeal to young people.
3. Present Jesus as the Son of God, friend, guide and model to be admired and imitated.
4. Present the basic content of Jesus’ revelation.
5. Present the rational basis for faith, the coherent truth of the faith and the relationship between the two.
6. Help young people to articulate the beliefs and teachings of the Church and to apply them to their lives.
7. Present other areas of Catholic belief including: Scripture, the Church, worship and sacraments, and the principles of Christian morality.
8. Help young people experience a deeper relationship with God through prayer and service.
9. Invite active participation in worship and community life with adult believers.
10. Include ongoing formation and regular reception of Eucharist and Reconciliation.
11. Invite, welcome and form young people for Confirmation.
12. Support vocation discernment.

— *National Directory for Catechesis*,
Chapter 7

**ADOLESCENT CONFIRMATION
ARCHDIOCESAN GUIDELINES**

Adolescent Confirmation: Archdiocesan Guidelines

“If we clearly present our Catholic beliefs, practices and values and assist our young people in articulating their faith experiences, we have more than a reasonably good chance they will have success behaving as Jesus’ disciples.”

Source Book on Adolescent Catechesis, Vol. I

Roles and Expectations

Confirmation is a parish celebration. In addition to the candidates themselves, parents, sponsors, catechists, ministers, pastors—each member of the worshipping community—share responsibility for inviting, welcoming, and preparing young people to complete their Christian initiation and be Confirmed.

CANDIDATES

It is expected young people, baptized into the Catholic faith as infants and already welcome at the Eucharistic table, will take seriously their call to complete their Christian initiation and begin preparing for Confirmation at the invitation of their parish community. **Such an invitation assumes they have been systematically instructed in the teachings and practices of the Catholic faith and meet the Grade 7 and Grade 8 Religious Education Curriculum Learner Benchmarks established by the Archdiocesan Office of Catholic Faith Formation (see Appendices 4 and 5).**

In the years leading up to the celebration of Confirmation, a young person is to have regularly attended Parish Religious Education and/or a Catholic School which has introduced them to Jesus and helped them develop a deeper understanding of his teachings and Catholic beliefs, practices and values. **If a young person has been away from the Church and/or their parish faith community for an extended period of time, every effort will be made to ensure they are given the guidance and support they need—according to their degree of readiness—to begin preparing for the sacrament. This may include asking them to complete a defined period of proximate formation.**

The adolescent Confirmation preparation model presented as part of this *Source Book* anticipates those seeking Confirmation will undoubtedly exhibit varying degrees of readiness and therefore encourages a process sensitive and responsive to the individual and developmental characteristics of adolescent candidates. In addition to formation to help a young person express their personal desire to receive the sacrament, it recommends practices and resources to help form the essential knowledge and commitment necessary for mature discipleship. Candidates seeking Confirmation are to be prayerfully, faithfully, and responsibly participating in all planned experiences of worship, study, and service so as to be able to make a loving and informed decision to follow Jesus.

PARENTS

When we invite Catholic young people to begin preparing for the sacrament of Confirmation, we are also extending an invitation to their parents. **This is a time for remembering the promises and responsibilities of Christian Baptism—for reflecting on this most important question: *What do you ask for your child?***

Parents are continually in the process of answering this question. At Confirmation, we again ask parents to support their child by encouraging their participation in preparation experiences. We also ask that they become involved themselves so it is not only about their child’s faith journey, but theirs as well.

The *National Directory of Catechesis (NDC)* emphasizes the importance of parent participation in Confirmation preparation—a time for parents and their children to share with each other what being *Catholic* means to them.

For this reason, a **Confirmation preparation journey should include several opportunities for parents to gather as a group, as well as with their adolescent candidate.** The parish model presented as part of this *Source Book* includes a number of examples designed to engage and support parents so they:

- **Appreciate their role as models in the faith development of their son/daughter.**
- **Deepen their own faith lives.**
- **Strengthen their family relationships so all grow in relationship with God.**

Parents, more than anyone, influence what their child will accept or reject—what their child will *choose to believe*. Let us take every opportunity to help parents so their children are better able to receive and experience the gift of faith and for whom *being Catholic* is central to their lives.

“As the primary educators of their children, parents, along with sponsors, are to be intimately involved in catechesis for Confirmation.”

Sharing the Light of Faith

SPONSORS

Sponsors serve as ministers and represent the faith community into which the candidate is being initiated. The Rite of Christian Initiation describes sponsors as “persons who have known and assisted the candidates and stand as witnesses to the candidates’ moral character, faith and intention.”

With this in mind, young people preparing for Confirmation are to be guided in their selection of a sponsor. **Early in the preparation process they are to be given a clear description of the following qualifications which are required by Church law (Canon 874):**

- **A sponsor must be at least 16-years-of-age.**
- **A sponsor must be a fully initiated Catholic (one who has celebrated Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist) who leads a life in harmony with the faith and the role to be undertaken.**
- **A sponsor must not be bound by any Church penalty.**
- **A sponsor must not be the parent of the one to be Confirmed.**

To these, the Archdiocese of Seattle adds:

- **Sponsors are to be selected in consultation with the parish Confirmation minister and the candidate’s parents. Selection is to be based on an individual’s appropriate lifestyle, participation in the Catholic faith, and the ability to provide the nurturing support expected of a sponsor.**
- **Candidates are to be encouraged to select one of their baptismal sponsors (godparents) if they meet requirements.**
- **Sponsors must be able to participate in the preparation process and be willing to serve as a guide, confidant and listener.**
- **Parishes are to provide formation for sponsors to help them appreciate the permanent nature of their role.**
- **Parishes are to provide opportunities for sponsors and candidates to participate in the preparation process together.**

By clearly describing the responsibilities of the sponsor and presenting them early in the process, everyone involved can better appreciate the significance of the role. This will encourage the selection of a Confirmation sponsor with whom the candidate has a positive, comfortable, and lasting relationship.

The goal is to provide practical and enjoyable opportunities throughout the process for sponsors and candidates to partner and grow in faith together. The Parish Model presented as part of this *Source Book* encourages the participation of sponsors. It appreciates sponsorship for adolescent Confirmation is a serious commitment and recommends any intended sponsor be willing and able to:

- **Attend an orientation session and other sessions at the invitation of their candidate.**
- **Attend gatherings and formation sessions specifically for sponsors.**
- **Participate in rituals and liturgical experiences as appropriate and when invited to do so by their candidate.**
- **Participate in the rehearsal and liturgy celebrating the Rite of Confirmation.**

These expectations assume the local residency of the sponsor and that s/he has a positive and comfortable relationship with the candidate. In circumstances where a candidate’s intended sponsor is unable to meet these criteria, a proxy sponsor may be designated. However, this should be the exception and not the rule.

PARISH COMMUNITY

In preparing young people for Confirmation we are as concerned with the life of the community into which our candidates are being fully initiated as we are with the individuals being Confirmed. The Catechumenate model understands the heart of the preparation journey as being located in the life of the full faith community. It is here our candidates, with the support of their parents and sponsors, are invited and encouraged to explore the promptings of the Holy Spirit in their lives and the challenge of embracing a new life—one experienced as both gift and responsibility.

As a faith community we are to be:

Inviting—intentionally seeking out and personally inviting all Catholic young people and their parents to explore a deeper encounter with God by beginning preparation for Confirmation.

Welcoming and evangelizing—providing community support and involvement through rituals and activities where candidates can experience the welcome and support of all members.

Informed and engaged—maintaining awareness of the candidates' preparation journey through pulpit announcements, notes in the parish bulletin, photo/essay displays in the gathering space, and requests for prayer and participation in parish activities.

Supportive—creating opportunities for candidates to socialize and grow in relationship with each other while gaining a sense of belonging to the larger Church through worship, prayer, study, and service. This includes continuing to invite and support the newly Confirmed as they assume increasingly responsible roles in the parish community. Our goal is to create and foster an environment of warmth, trust, acceptance and concern for the overall needs of our young people. As a faith community we are saying to our candidates:

“We love you and we’re here for you. We will help in whatever ways we can as you affirm your commitment to living as faithful disciples of Jesus. We are praying for you, your sponsor and your family as you prepare for fuller initiation into the Catholic faith at Confirmation.”

THE ARCHBISHOP

The Archbishop is the visible source and foundation of unity of the local Church and is the ordinary minister of the Sacrament of Confirmation. **The Archbishop is also the chief catechist with primary responsibility for catechesis in the diocese and for ensuring “catechists are adequately prepared for their task,”** (*Catechesi Tradendae*, 63).

The Archbishop and his staff also establish sacramental policy and religious education guidelines and ensure the textbooks and catechetical resources used in parishes are found on the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Conformity List.

PASTORS

The whole-hearted support of the pastor helps inspire the most fruitful Confirmation preparation. This is especially true when following the Catechumenate model. **Pastors who are passionate about helping to invite, welcome and guide young disciples as they prepare to be Confirmed can enhance the work of the entire parish community in this regard.** From their tireless effort to ensure all eligible youth are invited to begin preparing for Confirmation (in some cases personally locating *the missing* and encouraging them to return and complete their initiation); to their loving and enthusiastic presence as they preside at rituals affirming a young person's baptismal promises—an engaged pastor or parish life coordinator can be the difference between preparation which is life-altering and that which is rote.

The pastor's leadership also determines the formation of those with responsibility for leading catechesis and sacramental preparation and guides the healthy development of relationships being established and nurtured at this time.

More specifically, pastors are responsible for ensuring the goals of the Archdiocesan catechetical mission are achieved. This includes developing and implementing a total parish plan for catechesis where:

- **The Baptismal Catechumenate inspires all parish catechesis.**
- **Catechesis emphasizes age-appropriate opportunities for adults, youth and children and includes a comprehensive plan for youth ministry and ongoing formation for catechetical leaders.**
- **Suitable catechesis is imparted for the celebration of the sacraments.**

The pastor, as the spiritual leader of the parish faith community, can do more to *model Christ* and responsive discipleship than anyone or anything else. Therefore, the Confirmation model presented as part of this *Source Book* encourages the pastor and/or parish life coordinator to play a visible and active role in inviting, welcoming and supporting candidates, parents, sponsors and the full parish community as all reflect on what it means to be a fully initiated Catholic and to responsibly prepare young people to celebrate Confirmation.

PARISH CONFIRMATION MINISTERS

Whether it be the parish's pastoral associate for faith formation; the youth minister; a person assigned specifically to lead the adolescent Confirmation process; or some combination of these—all involved in ministering to adolescents are called to help them know what Jesus taught and intentionally appropriate essential Catholic beliefs.

Without such understanding, young people are vulnerable to whatever is the latest religious or spiritual trend of the moment.

To do this in the most meaningful way means recruiting people to these roles who are not only faithful Catholics committed to Jesus and the Gospel, but who also enjoy being with young people and have the necessary knowledge and skills (or the willingness to develop them) to create and/or facilitate positive learning experiences. And, as handing on the faith is never a matter of passing on doctrine alone, **those ministering to young people must be good listeners and able to establish healthy and appropriate relationships that invite active participation.**

The best practice recommendations presented as part of this *Source Book* encourage catechetical ministers to present faith themes in a manner which is engaging, enjoyable, as well as informative. **The goal in developing ministers is to help them transform a lesson or activity from a task into an experience. This means empowering them to teach as Jesus taught—with Sacred Scripture, simple stories, objects and most especially through relationships. Methods which are non-threatening and respect, affirm, and build trust and openness are to be the norm.**

The expectation is those called to this ministry take seriously their role as a spiritual guide and mentor and prayerfully and faithfully help young people assume responsibilities that come with full Christian initiation.

"Let us empower young people to live as disciples of Christ in our world today; draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the Catholic faith community; and foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person."

*Renewing the Vision
A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*

LET US REMEMBER . . .

We expect our candidates to be exactly who they are—*young people* struggling with the many issues of adolescence while trying to be more responsive to the workings of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Some adolescent Confirmation candidates (coming from less than ideal family situations) may require special guidance and support in involving their parents and sponsors in the preparation process. This situation may present itself in a number of ways, including a candidate's own reluctance to participate in certain sessions and activities. Similarly, some parish communities may be less than welcoming of young people and may lack parish leadership and support for catechesis and youth ministry.

These situations may make implementing new experiences for adolescent Confirmation more challenging. However, it might be argued this is precisely where we must focus our attention. **We can support our candidates by being sensitive to their particular situations and by providing a preparation journey that introduces them to a community of believers ready to help them nurture positive relationships with other significant adults—even recommending parish Confirmation sponsors if necessary.** And, we can support our worshipping community by helping them do and be just this—faithful, forgiving and joyful models of the Catholic faith. Such mutual sharing can provide both young candidates and the worshipping community the love and support each needs to be faithful disciples, grateful stewards and active evangelists to the *Risen Christ*.

Age and Name Requirements

CONFIRMATION AGE

Young people in the Archdiocese of Seattle who were baptized into the Catholic faith as infants and now want to be Confirmed, are to be at least in the **eleventh grade and/or sixteen-years-of-age** at the time they celebrate the sacrament. Preparation for Confirmation is to take place at the parish in which they presently worship and/or are registered.

Archdiocesan policies and guidelines for adolescent Confirmation preparation focus on providing the formation and support necessary for young people—primarily between the ages of 13 and 16—to consciously and freely embrace their baptismal promises and deepen their initiation into the life of the faith community. The entire preparation journey is therefore geared toward helping young people make a mature and heartfelt decision to be Confirmed.

Parents are responsible for encouraging attendance at preparation gatherings and activities while still maintaining their child's freedom to make the final choice. **The choice our young people are being asked to make is not whether or not to *prepare*—but, more significantly, whether or not to *believe*. Such a life-altering decision can only be made after a period of thoughtful study, intentional practice and prayerful consideration.**

Having met the minimum age requirement, the emphasis in preparing Catholic young people for Confirmation rightly focuses on readiness (see Adolescent Confirmation Curriculum, p. 28 of this *Source Book*).

"No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations."

Genesis 17:5

CONFIRMATION NAME

The practice of choosing a Confirmation name is meant to symbolize a candidate's personal *conversion*. Indeed, the changing of one's name as a sign of conversion occurs a number of times in Scripture: Abram becomes Abraham; Jacob becomes Israel; Simon is called Peter.

However, in the Catechumenate model of Christian Initiation used by parishes **in the Archdiocese of Seattle, Confirmation candidates do not choose a new name but are Confirmed with their baptismal name.** The act of reaffirming the name given them at Baptism bears witness to the unity of the sacraments of initiation and affirms one's baptismal promises.

While candidates are Confirmed with their baptismal name, they are at the same time strongly encouraged to select a person from the canon of saints and "blessed" of the Church to study and emulate as a patron of their Confirmation. The saint can be the one whose name they carry, or one whom they admire and would like to know more about. The challenges, holiness and charitable works of these holy people are a source of inspiration and serve as an example of what it means to be a faithful disciple, grateful steward and active evangelist.

If a candidate desires, they may be Confirmed with both their baptismal name and the name of their patron saint.

Helpful websites for researching the names and lives of saints of the Roman Catholic Church include:

www.catholic.org/saints

www.americancatholic.org

www.oce.catholic.com

Periods of Faith Formation

When we speak of *Catholic* identity what we're really talking about is forming young people who love being Catholic and feel Catholic at their core. No one experience or event will accomplish this. It is a culmination of many "moments" when God's presence is made known to them; when God is invited into their lives making faith a possibility.

The Confirmation preparation model offered here honors and builds upon prior periods of formation—in the family home, parish religious education and youth ministry programs, and in Catholic Schools. It takes seriously a young person's readiness and assumes those seeking to be Confirmed have been systematically formed in the Catholic faith and are therefore ready to begin immediate formation and discernment around the sacrament itself.

FORMATION PERIODS FOR ADOLESCENT CONFIRMATION

REMOTE FORMATION

Early Home Baptism to Age 5

The catechesis an infant and developing child receives after being baptized into the Catholic faith—beginning at home and also as part of a worshipping parish community. Catholic parents, godparents, grandparents and immediate and extended families, together with the full parish community, introduce Jesus, his Church and our Catholic faith primarily through weekly worship, family prayer and in practicing Catholic religious traditions.

Home and School Typically Ages 5 to 12

The daily long-term formation a child receives from an early age—first at home and also in a Catholic School and/or a Parish Faith Formation Program. As the primary or foundational educators of their children, parents are responsible for bringing them to Church for worship and to receive the sacraments. Catholic parishes and school communities support parents by providing adult faith formation opportunities and by offering age-appropriate religious education for all primary grades designed to provide children with a systematic presentation of the Catholic faith.

PROXIMATE FORMATION (FORMING PERIOD) Typically Ages 13 to 15

The formal, systematic, ongoing Catholic faith formation a young person receives through Catholic schools, parish faith formation and youth ministry programs. Emphasis is on the study of the Sacred Scriptures, specifically the life and ministry of Jesus. This is also a time for affirming Catholic identity and providing young people with an age-appropriate, integrated way of **Seeing, Celebrating and Living** life as a faithful disciple, grateful steward and active evangelist of the *Risen* Christ. This is typically a two-year period which precedes an invitation to be Confirmed in the Catholic faith.

IMMEDIATE FORMATION (SACRAMENTAL PERIOD) Typically Ages 16 to 18

The defined period of formation a young person completes upon expressing a desire to be Confirmed and completing a period of proximate formation. **One enters this period of formation after proximate formation is complete—this is not a starting place. The focus now is on preparing candidates for celebration of the sacrament itself with special emphasis on the significance of Christian Initiation, the role and activity of the Holy Spirit, and the actions, words and gestures of the Rite of Confirmation.** With the increasing support and involvement of peers, parents, sponsors, and the entire parish community, candidates are encouraged to continue their lifelong faith journey and grow in relationship with Christ and his Church. **Candidates in the Archdiocese of Seattle are typically 16-years-of-age at the time the sacrament of Confirmation is conferred.**

MISSION AND CONTINUING FORMATION All fully initiated into the Catholic Faith

The ongoing catechesis and support the newly Confirmed receive as they transition from the heightened experience of celebrating the sacrament to everyday life as a faithful Catholic. Parishes actively invite the newly Confirmed to celebrate Eucharist and to continue serving the worshipping community as grateful stewards—as Eucharistic ministers, lectors, musicians, ushers, greeters, catechists, and in other ways which encourage the sharing of their gifts of time, talent and treasure. Participation in youth and young adult ministries is also to be strongly encouraged.

Discerning and Assessing Readiness

“In evangelizing, the Church must never try to impose the Gospel upon people by force or by manipulation. Rather, we should help people to recognize the presence and action of God already present in their lives and culture, show them how belief in Christ can further transform them, then trust in the grace of the Holy Spirit to lead them to a free decision.”

Reclaim the Fire
Rev. Martin Pable

The adolescent Confirmation guidelines for the Archdiocese of Seattle point to Canon Law (889) in determining a candidate’s readiness to receive the sacrament:

“Outside the danger of death, to be licitly Confirmed it is required, if the person has the use of reason, that one be suitably instructed, properly disposed and able to renew one’s baptismal promises.”

The information provided here is meant to help those charged with determining readiness by providing criteria for assessing whether a young person has been *suitably instructed* and to guide them in defining what constitutes *proper disposition* on the part of the candidate. Each of the criteria presented supports this overriding principle:

“When it comes to the matter of determining readiness for the sacrament, responsibility for doing so falls on neither the catechist nor the process coordinator nor the pastor; the responsibility falls squarely on the candidates themselves.”

—Thomas Zanzig, Saint Mary’s Press

This is not meant to “let us off the hook” or to convey there are not legitimate ways to determine whether candidates have faithfully fulfilled their preparation responsibilities. It is to remind us our task as pastoral leaders is to present to our candidates, parents and sponsors reasonable criteria for accepting Confirmation and full Christian initiation and then offer the most inviting, welcoming and engaging formation we are capable of providing.

At a *minimum*, we expect young people presenting themselves for Confirmation to:

- 1. Have participated fully in a process of preparation with attitudes and understandings appropriate to adolescence.**
- 2. Be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of Jesus, his teachings and the values and practices of the Catholic faith as defined by the *Adolescent Confirmation Curriculum* (see p. 28 and Appendices 4 and 5).**

- 3. Be faithfully attending Mass and receiving Eucharist weekly.**
- 4. Be able and willing to express their free decision to accept Confirmation and a desire to continue to nurture their relationship with the Risen Christ.**
- 5. Be in a state of grace having participated in the sacrament of Reconciliation as part of immediate preparation for celebration of Confirmation.**

The parish model of preparation presented as part of this *Source Book* places great emphasis on *proximate* formation. It encourages a period of invitation which includes a preliminary candidate and parent interview as a way of determining an appropriate preparation journey.

If a young person is unable to demonstrate participation in a systematic parish faith formation program or attendance at a Catholic school, they are to be invited to begin a period of *proximate* formation before *immediate* formation for the celebration of the sacrament is proposed. The expected outcome of *proximate* formation is the young person’s free decision to accept Confirmation and only then to begin preparation for the sacrament itself.

Our focus, therefore, is more on whether a young person is *ready to celebrate Confirmation*. A preparation process geared toward helping a young person make a mature and informed decision is the preferred approach. And, while we are to be mindful of the demands of adolescence, let us not underestimate a young person’s capacity to make life-altering decisions—decisions regularly confronting them in our secular world. By helping them know and understand what is distinctive about being *Catholic*, why it matters, and the benefits of belonging to a living tradition, we invite them to a richer life and instill in them a true desire to be Confirmed.

Religious Education: Adolescent Confirmation Curriculum

Young people seeking Confirmation are expected to meet the Archdiocese of Seattle’s Religious Education Curriculum Learner Benchmarks appropriate to adolescence. **This means an ability to demonstrate at least an *Eighth Grade level of knowledge concerning the principle teachings and practices of the faith at the time the sacrament is conferred.*** For this reason, it is highly desirable for young people baptized as infants to have been **regularly attending a parish religious education program and/or Catholic school in the years preceding Confirmation** (see Periods of Faith Formation, p. 26).

The expectation is that adolescent candidates seeking to begin preparing for Confirmation will have been systematically instructed in the faith in accordance with the Archdiocesan Religious Education Curriculum through Grade 8 (see Appendices 4 and 5). The Confirmation Learner Benchmarks presented here therefore focus on:

Immediate Formation

High School Christian Initiation, Catholic Identity and The Rite of Confirmation

The Confirmation Learner Benchmarks presented on the following pages are new and have been specifically developed for this *Source Book*. Parishes and Catholic Schools are to reference these when developing their individual religious education programs to ensure a consistent and comprehensive presentation of the faith. Religious educators and youth ministers are encouraged to combine approved texts with supplemental resources, exercises and activities which stimulate discussion, encourage questions, and affirm the gifts and truths young people are discovering during this period of catechesis. Also, emphasis is to be given the actions, words, and gestures of the Rite itself.

The overriding goal is to present young people for Confirmation who are actively participating in faith formation appropriate to their age and experience and who ***See, Celebrate and Live*** as faithful Catholics.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: MAJOR COMPONENTS	
1.0	Faith enables a person to make sense of life.
2.0	Knowledge and skills are needed to find in Scripture a source of nourishment for our own life with God and neighbor.
3.0	Creation is God’s first revelation of love and invitation for men and women to grow in loving relationship with creation, their neighbor, and God.
4.0	Jesus Christ is the Eternal Son of God and the Son of Mary (fully Divine and fully Human) and reveals to us the Trinity: Father, Son and Spirit.
5.0	The Church is the community of Christ’s disciples.
6.0	The Seven Sacraments of the Church are encounters with the Risen Christ in which one responds and grows as a disciple.
7.0	The prayer of the Church community nourishes the life of each member of the community itself.
8.0	Christ calls us to be grateful disciples committed to praising God and proclaiming the Good News through loving service of neighbor and the promotion of justice.
9.0	Sacred Scripture and Church teaching provide us with: the meaning and sources of morality; the key concepts framing the moral life; and the guidance for making moral decisions in a complex world.
10.0	There are various forms of personal prayer that enable one to deepen their sense of being loved, of belonging, and of making a difference.

Period of Immediate Formation: Confirmation

Seeing as a Catholic

1.0 Faith enables a person to make sense of life.

1.1 Life is mysterious; our hearts long to make sense of life and to find meaning in our lives.

Candidates will:

- 1.1.1 Be able to articulate several ways in which life is both exciting and full of possibilities and is also uncertain and complex.
- 1.1.2 Know that *mystery* in the religious sense means that one can and should keep on asking questions to deepen one's understanding of life.

1.2 Everyone asks certain questions.

Candidates will:

- 1.2.1 Know that all sincere questions are acceptable and important.
- 1.2.2 Know why we, as Catholics, believe that there is objective reality.
- 1.2.3 Understand the reasoning process for discerning what is true.

1.3 Religion provides ultimate answers to the basic questions of life.

Candidates will:

- 1.3.1 Be able to define/describe the difference between Theology, Faith and Religion.
- 1.3.2 Be able to state the ultimate questions of life.
- 1.3.3 Be able to state the answers to these questions as understood by the Catholic Church.

Recommended Scripture Passages:

Creation (Gen. 1:1)
Life's Difficulties (Eccl. 1-7)
Instructions to Young People (Prov. 1-4)

2.0 Knowledge and skills are needed to find in Scripture a source of nourishment for our own life with God and neighbor.

2.1 The Bible is a written record of God's Revelation, which is His encounter with a people to bring them to new life.

Candidates will:

- 2.1.1 Understand the origin and development of the Bible: first in the experience of people who witnessed God's or the Son of God's loving and life-giving presence, then through their stories and reflections as have been written down, collected and approved by the Church.
- 2.1.2 Know what the Church means when it teaches that the Bible is inspired, inerrant and needs to be interpreted.
- 2.1.3 Know how to read the Bible in a way that helps them understand how God has interacted in the past with people of faith and how God continues to interact with people today.

2.7 Certain themes (Escape from slavery/sin, Covenant, Entering into Freedom/New Life/Resurrection, etc.) help one understand the Bible's message of God's saving Love.

Candidates will:

- 2.7.1 Know the main theme of the Bible (God loves us; God is with us; God is for us).
- 2.7.2 Know the four key stories of the Bible (Creation, God's New Creation, Exodus and Jesus' Death and Resurrection).
- 2.7.3 Know the four key images of the Bible (The Storm, The Desert, The Mountain and The Eternal Wedding Banquet).

Recommended Scripture Passages:

God So Loved the World (Jn. 3:16)
Jesus, Emmanuel (Matt. 1:23-25)
God's Love in Christ (Rm. 8:31-32)
Creation (Gen. 1-3)
The New Jerusalem (Rev. 21-22)
The Exodus (Ex. 3:4-22:6; 1-13; 12:33-14:31; 16-17:7; 19-20)
The Conquest of the Land of Canaan (Josh. 1:1-9)
Jesus Stills a Storm (Mk. 4:35-41; Mt. 8:23-27; Lk. 8:22-23)
The Desert (Ex. 16:1-3)
The Mountain Top (Lk. 9:28-36)
The Wedding Banquet (Jn. 2:1-11)





3.0 Creation is God’s first revelation of love and invitation for men and women to grow in loving relationship with creation, their neighbor and God.

3.1 All of life is a gift of God’s love and there exists a purpose, goodness and interdependency of all creation.

Candidates will:

- 3.1.1 Understand the interconnectedness of all creation.
- 3.1.2 Understand God, the creator, is a God of Goodness, Order (both purpose and relationships) and Life.

3.2 Men and women, created in God’s image, have a special dignity; God desires an intimate and loving relationship with us.

Candidates will:

- 3.2.1 Understand they are created in the image of God and are therefore inherently good.
- 3.2.2 Understand what the Church teaches about “respecting life.”
- 3.2.3 Know what the Church teaches about Love and Chastity and how to apply these to their own lives.
- 3.2.4 Understand that in “Jesus Christ, God not only speaks to man but also seeks him out—that the Incarnation of the Son of God attests that God goes in search of man,” (Pope John Paul II, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 1994, 7).
- 3.2.5 Know that repeatedly throughout the Bible, God says to each one, “I want to be your God and I want you to be my people.”

3.3 Men and women have special responsibilities as stewards of God’s Creation.

Candidates will:

- 3.3.1 Appreciate the power of the Holy Spirit working in their lives with a special awareness for the gifts and fruit of the Spirit.
- 3.3.2 Have an appreciation for their unique talents and gifts.

3.3.3 Understand their responsibility to make the most of their talents and gifts in service to God and others (*The Engaged Church*, p. 56).

3.4 The wounded nature of humanity affects every man and woman and makes it more difficult to live God’s way.

Candidates will:

- 3.4.1 Understand why we need the sacrament of Reconciliation and know how to prepare for and celebrate it.
- 3.4.2 Understand the consequences of sin: Original, moral, serious and venial.
- 3.4.3 Understand how going to confession is like passing through the Red Sea so that we become free from the *mastery of sin* and can live in freedom the new life Christ brought us.

3.5 God promises a Savior, one who will finally enable men and women to live God’s way of life (i.e., Kingdom Living).

Candidates will:

- 3.5.1 Understand that Jesus is the fullness of God’s revelation of Goodness, Order and Life.

Recommended Scripture Passages:

God Has Spoken by His Son (Heb. 1:1-4)
The Word of Life (1 Jn. 1:1-4)



4.0 Jesus Christ is the Eternal Son of God and the Son of Mary (fully Divine and fully human) and reveals to us the Trinity: Father, Son and Spirit.

4.2 The Paschal Mystery (the passion, death, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus) is central to our lives as disciples.

Candidates will:

- 4.2.1 Know that the Paschal Mystery is foreshadowed by the Exodus event.

- 4.2.2 Know how the three stages of the Paschal Mystery parallel that of the Exodus in:
- The “capture” (Jesus is beaten and tormented like the slaves of Egypt).
 - The establishment of the New Covenant (which parallels the Covenant of Mt. Sinai)—

- You will be dearer to me than all other people (Ex. 19:5). I no longer call you slaves. . . I have called you my friends (Jn. 15:15).
- The Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:1-17). I give you a new commandment: Love one another as I have loved you (Jn. 15:12).

- The Resurrection (Jn. 10:10; Jn. 20:19-23) which is the Entering of the true Promised Land (Josh. 1:1-10),

- 4.2.3 Know that from the Exodus event and the Paschal Mystery we learn that when we are trapped, God acts to free us and give us new life:

- God hears our cry for help.
- God acts at the last moment to free us and give us new life (so it is clear God did it and not us).
- God gives us what we need to live each day.
- God fulfills the promise to give us new life.

4.5 Jesus teaches us how to love our neighbor and establishes a new covenant between God and humanity and among humans; the heart of the new covenant is love.

Candidates will:

- 4.5.1 Make a personal faith commitment by professing their faith in Christ and the Church he founded.
- 4.5.2 Have a clear understanding of Christ’s message—the Good News.
- 4.5.3 Have a clear understanding of what is expected of them as a faithful disciple, grateful steward and active evangelist in the Church today.
- 4.5.4 Understand why conversion is an important element in one’s response to God and how turning away from sin and believing in the Good News of Christ proclaimed in the Gospels necessarily changes how a person thinks, speaks and acts.

Recommended Scripture Passages:

The Exodus (Ex. 1:8-14; 19:1-8)
 The Conquest of the Land of Canaan (Josh. 1:1-10)
 Jesus’ Death and Resurrection (Mt. 26-28; Mk. 14-16; Lk. 23-24; Jn. 18-21)



5.0 The Church is the community of Christ’s disciples.

5.2 The Church, the community of Christ’s disciples, is meant to reflect and make visible the life of the Trinity.

Candidates will:

- 5.2.1 Understand that from the beginning of Salvation History, God has chosen people not as individuals but as members of a specific community.
- 5.2.2 Understand “by the giving of Christ’s Spirit, He founded after His death and Resurrection, a new community composed of all those who receive Him in faith and in love—this He did through His Body, which is the Church—there everyone, as members of one of the other—would render mutual service according to the different gifts bestowed on each,” (Vatican II, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Gaudium et Spes*, 32),
- 5.2.3 Understand ways of deepening their personal relationship with the Risen Christ and how this necessarily involves nurturing communal relationships (i.e., within their family, parish, school, neighborhood, work, etc.).
- 5.2.4 Understand being Catholic means being joined to Christ and to each other in the Church Christ founded by a profession of faith, participation in the sacraments, and ecclesiastical governance and communion (Vatican II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium*, 14).

Recommended Scripture Passages:

The First Converts (Acts 2:37-41)
 Life Among the Believers (Acts 2:42-47)
 One Body with Many Members (1 Cor. 12:12-31)

Celebrating as a Catholic

6.0 The Seven Sacraments of the Church are encounters with the Risen Christ in which one responds and grows as a disciple.

6.2 The Seven Sacraments are sacraments of the Church and their celebration constitutes the central prayer of the Church.

Candidates will:

- 6.2.1 Be able to define/describe a sacrament and what constitutes a sacrament.
- 6.2.2 Know that Christ is the Sacrament of God and the Church, and the Church is the Sacrament of Christ.
- 6.2.3 Know the seven Sacraments of the Church and their primary purpose.
- 6.2.4 Understand why the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist are sacraments of initiation for the entire Christian life.
- 6.2.5 Understand the importance of regularly participating in the sacramental life of the Church.
- 6.2.6 Know how to celebrate the Sacraments of the Church as encounters with the Risen Christ and how the sacramental life of the Church unites us to Jesus and his life, death and Resurrection.
- 6.2.7 Understand the six major actions of the Rite of Confirmation (words, symbols and gestures).

Recommended Scripture Passages:

The Baptism of Jesus (Mt. 3:13-17; Mk. 1:9-11; Lk. 3:21-22; Jn. 1:29-34)
Institution of the Lord's Supper (Mt. 26:26-30; Mk. 14:22-26; Lk. 22:14-23; Jn. 6:1-13, 25-59; 1 Cor. 11:23-26)
The Coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-13)
Reconciliation (Jn. 20:21-23)
Teaching About Marriage (Mt. 19:1-12; Mk. 10:1-12; Jn. 2:1-11)
Anointing of the Sick (Mk. 6:7-13; Lk. 13:10-13; 2 Tim. 2:11-12)
Holy Orders (Mt. 10:1-4; Mk. 3:14-19; Lk. 6:12-16, Jn. 13:1-14; Rom. 12:1-8)

7.0 The prayer of the Church community nourishes the life of each member of the community itself.

7.1 The Eucharistic liturgy is "the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed, at the same time it is the fount from which all the Church's power flows," (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10).

Candidates will:

- 7.1.1 Understand what's happening at Mass by studying its origins in Scripture and referencing key parts of the liturgy in resources such as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, worship missals, etc.
- 7.1.2 Understand what is expected of them as members of the Eucharistic community—proper disposition—so the liturgy may produce its full effects.
- 7.1.3 Be actively participating in weekly worship and receiving Eucharist.

Recommended Scripture Passages:

Institution of the Lord's Supper (Mt. 26:26-30; Mk. 14:22-26; Lk. 22:14-23; Jn. 6:1-13, 25-59; 1 Cor. 11:23-26)



Living as a Catholic

8.0 Christ calls us to be grateful disciples committed to praising God and proclaiming the Good News through loving service of neighbor and the promotion of justice.

8.1 As disciples we are called to constant conversion and continual growth in virtue and holiness.

Candidates will:

- 8.1.1 Understand how Jesus intended and designed the Church to be a community so we might find life and love among others.



- 8.1.2 Understand to be faithfully Catholic means continually striving to give unconditionally of oneself (agape love).
- 8.1.3 Know the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy and how by practicing them we lovingly serve our neighbor.
- 8.1.4 Understand the Church as the “Body of Christ” and be involved in the life of their parish at least according to the precepts of the Church.
- 8.1.5 Understand the main tenets of Catholic Social Teaching and what the Church means by “preferential option for the poor.”
- 8.1.6 Discover some of the things they do well and how to ask the Holy Spirit for guidance in using their gifts and strengths in service of Christ and the Church.
- 8.1.7 Be prepared to explain in their own words what they believe and why.
- 8.1.8 Have begun formulating answers to questions such as: How did I come to know Christ? Why am I a member of the Catholic Church? How has Christ made a difference in my life? What can I say to someone to help them put faith in Christ and His Church?
- 8.1.9 Understand how to behave and speak in ways that draw others to Christ.

Recommended Scripture Passages:

Discipleship (Mk. 8:34-38; Lk. 9:1-6; Jn. 4:1-42)
 Sermon on the Plain (Lk. 6:17-49)
 New Life in Christ (Rom. 12:1-21)
 Spiritual Gifts (1 Cor. 12:1-11)
 One Body with Many Members (1 Cor. 12:12-31)
 The Gift of Love (1 Cor. 13:1-13)
 Unity in the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:1-15)
 Good Stewards of God’s Grace (1 Peter 4:7-11)



“Scripture—in particular the stories of Jesus—serves discipleship by responding to three questions: What should I see? Why should I act? And who should I be?”

Making Disciples
 Timothy E. O’Connell

9.0 Sacred Scripture and Church teaching provide us with: the meaning and sources of morality; the key concepts framing the moral life; and the guidance for making moral decisions in a complex world.

9.1 To be moral as a Christian means acting as Christ would act.

Candidates will:

- 9.1.1 Know what is meant by morality.
- 9.1.2 Know what it means, as one who has chosen to follow Christ, to be a moral person.
- 9.1.3 Know what virtue means and how to foster growth in virtue.

9.5 The Church’s moral teaching inspires, guides, corrects and strengthens us as Christ’s disciples.

Candidates will:

- 9.5.1 Be aware of life’s important choices and the Christian tools and resources available to help them do what is right and just.
- 9.5.2 Know the steps for making a moral decision when facing a conflict of values.
- 9.5.3 Appreciate how today’s multiple media messages can influence their decisions and how to discern what is right and good.

Recommended Scripture Passages:

The Golden Rule (Lk. 6:31)
 The Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:1-17; Deut. 5:1-21)
 The Great Commandment (Mt. 22:34-40; Mk. 12:28-34; Lk. 10:25-28)
 The Beatitudes (Mt. 5:1-12; Lk. 6:20-26)
 The Inner Conflict (Rom. 7:14-25)
 Life of the Unredeemed and Redeemed (Gal. 5:16-25)
 New Life in Christ (Col. 3:1-17)
 Live in the Light (1 Jn. 1:5-10)

10.0 There are various forms of personal prayer that enable one to deepen their sense of being loved, of belonging, and of making a difference.

10.1 Personal prayer is essential for growth as a disciple of Christ.

Candidates will:

10.1.1 Understand that personal union with God is the whole point of Christian living.

10.1.2 Be familiar with a variety of prayer practices that help deepen their relationship with Christ and His Church.

10.1.3 Understand what it means to “enter God’s presence” in prayer and how daily prayer benefits their life.

10.5 The Holy Spirit draws us to pray, helps us when prayer is difficult, and leads us to experience God’s presence within us.

Candidates will:

10.5.1 Be familiar with the gifts and fruit of the Holy Spirit and how these strengthen us and provide practical resources for daily Christian living.

10.5.2 Know how to call upon the Holy Spirit when praying, reading Scripture and living as faithful disciples, grateful stewards and active evangelists to the Risen Christ.

Recommended Scripture Passages:

Concerning Prayer (Mt. 6:5-15; Lk. 11:2-4)

Perseverance in Prayer (Lk. 11:5-13)

Jesus Prays in Gethsemane (Mt. 26:36-39)

The Promise of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:15-29; 16:7-15)

The Coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4)

The Works of the Flesh (Gal. 5:16-25)

Spiritual Gifts (1 Cor. 12:1-11)

The Fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-26)



**HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE,
PARENTS AND SPONSORS IN
THEIR SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT**

- Challenge young people to deepen their relationship with God—to make spiritual growth a priority. Make belonging to a Scripture study, service or mission effort, etc. part of the expectations for Confirmation (and parish life).
- Provide regular feedback—“hold up the mirror” so candidates, parents and sponsors can see their talents and strengths and find the right fit for sharing these with their parish community. Help them reflect on their talents, strengths and gifts.
- Be creative in helping candidates find their calling—start by asking them three questions to support their spiritual development:
 1. What are your talents and strengths?
 2. What do you love to do?
 3. If time and money were no object, what would you do for God?
- Not everyone will be able to fulfill his or her calling exclusively through roles within the faith community—but creative spiritual leaders can help guide young people toward finding God’s purpose for their lives.

Adapted from
“Growing An Engaged Church”
Albert L. Winseman

**ADOLESCENT CONFIRMATION
A PARISH MODEL**

Adolescent Confirmation: A Parish Model

A Vision

Confirmation marks a unique moment in a person's life
when one is invited to grow in faith and,
through the power of the Holy Spirit, embrace a *new maturity**
where all that has gone before takes on richer
and deeper meaning further forming one as a
faithful disciple,
grateful steward,
and active evangelist
of the *Risen Christ*.

**As defined in *Secularity and the Gospel* by Rev. Ronald Rolheiser*

Seven Guiding Principles

1. We regularly and personally invite and welcome all baptized Catholic young people registered in the Archdiocese of Seattle between the ages of 13 and 18 to begin the Confirmation preparation journey.
2. We faithfully prepare young people to **See, Celebrate** and **Live** life as Catholics so they may know and embrace their Catholic identity and understand what it means to live life as a faithful disciple, grateful steward and active evangelist.
3. We accompany young people and their parents on their spiritual journey—marking a clear path uniting Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist and emphasizing catechesis as an initiation and apprenticeship of the entire Christian life.
4. We create and foster in young people a commitment to the Risen Christ by sharing, affirming and modeling the lifelong faith practices of worship, prayer, study, stewardship and moral decision-making.
5. We regularly identify, evaluate and implement best practices and resources adaptable to a variety of parish settings to enrich and complement adolescent Confirmation preparation.
6. We appreciate the vital role the entire Church assembly plays in effective evangelization and take our cue from the Baptismal Catechumenate for creating a Confirmation preparation journey which—through relationships, ritual and worship—involves parents, sponsors and the entire parish community in modeling and nurturing the faith of our young people.
7. We value the faith commitment of our paid and volunteer ministers and provide them with the formation, resources and support they need to guide and prepare young people, their parents and sponsors to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation.

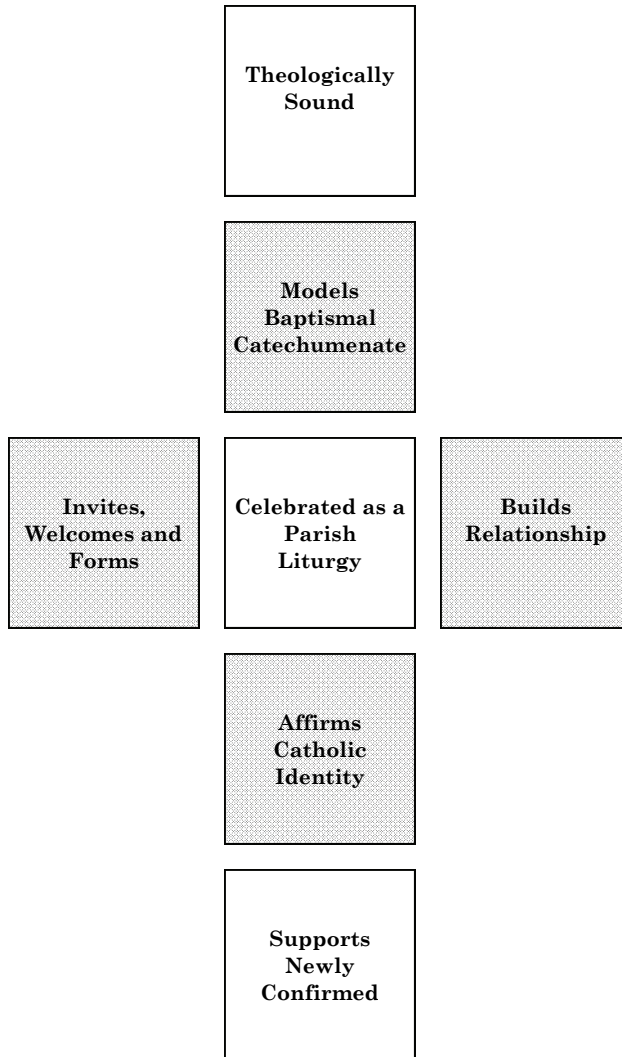
ADOLESCENT CONFIRMATION

Essential Components and Best Practices

This framework for adolescent Confirmation is responsive to Seattle Archdiocesan policies and guidelines and addresses the needs of young people, their parents, sponsors and the entire faith community. The recommended parish best practices that follow support seven essential components:

1. (Is) Theologically Sound
2. Models the Baptismal Catechumenate
3. Affirms Catholic Identity
4. Invites, Welcomes and Forms
5. Builds Relationship
6. (Is) Celebrated as a Parish Liturgy
7. Supports the Newly Confirmed

The preparation model recommended defines proximate formation for Confirmation as typically occurring in Grades 9 and 10, with immediate preparation and celebration of the sacrament in Grade 11 (i.e., 16-years-of-age).



1. Theologically Sound

Best Practices

1. In accordance with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, parishes understand and clearly present the Sacrament of Confirmation as “increasing and deepening the grace of Baptism; strengthening the baptismal conferral of the Holy Spirit; and incorporating the baptized more firmly in Christ. In Confirmation the baptized cement their bond with the Church, associate themselves more closely with the Church’s mission and experience an increase in the gifts of the Holy Spirit helping them bear witness to the Christian faith in words and deeds.”

2. Models the Baptismal Catechumenate

Best Practices

1. The parish adolescent Confirmation preparation journey reflects the Baptismal Catechumenate with the close relationship between Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist clearly presented as an apprenticeship for the entire Christian life.
2. In accordance with the *Apostolic Constitution on the Sacrament of Confirmation*, parishes understand and clearly present that “the faithful are born anew by Baptism, strengthened by the Sacrament of Confirmation, and sustained by the food of eternal life in the Eucharist.”
3. Confirmation is understood and presented as marking one stage of initiation—celebrating our common baptismal life, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and a gradual and continuing growth into the Eucharistic community connecting young people to parish life.

3. Affirms Catholic Identity

Best Practices

1. Parishes assist parents in guiding their children’s spiritual journey clearly marking meaningful milestones and celebrating the sacramental life of the Church. Parishes provide parents of the newly Baptized information illustrating expectations and experiences vital to a child’s Catholic identity and faith development, including a planning guide for preparing and celebrating the sacraments of Reconciliation, First Holy Communion and Confirmation (in Remote and Proximate Periods of Formation).
2. A defined period of proximate formation (typically two-years) precedes sacramental preparation and young people are clearly able to demonstrate they have been consistently participating in systematic faith formation at a Catholic parish and/or school.
3. Preparation sessions/activities/experiences help young people rediscover and responsibly practice the teachings, traditions and rituals central to the Catholic faith.

4. Invites, Welcomes and Forms

INVITES

Best Practices

1. Pastors designate a Confirmation minister to design and facilitate the parish adolescent Confirmation process. The Confirmation minister participates in regular Archdiocesan formation opportunities to obtain certification and ensure adolescent Confirmation policies are clearly understood and consistently administered using a United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) approved resource as the *primary* catechetical text (supplementing it with other Archdiocesan recommended materials and resources).
2. Parishes annually review baptismal records and create/update a database to track and notify parents of all young people in the parish between the ages of 13 and 16 inviting them to have their child/ren begin preparing for Confirmation.
3. Pastors (or their designee) call and/or visit the parents of baptized young people between the ages of 13 and 16 who are no longer part of the regular worshipping community and/or attending parish faith formation programs (or those attending non-Catholic private schools) to personally invite them to return to their parish faith community and for their adolescent child/ren to begin preparing for Confirmation.
4. Pastors (or their designee) work with their parish faith formation ministry, parish school and Catholic high school(s) to identify and invite all eighth graders and non-Confirmed high school youth to begin the Confirmation preparation process.

WELCOMES

Best Practices

1. Those who will be involved in the parish adolescent Confirmation ministry are welcomed and introduced by the pastor or parish life coordinator to the faith community during a parish liturgy and receive a special blessing.
2. Parish Confirmation ministers and volunteers attend an orientation session introducing the parish adolescent Confirmation preparation model and tools which will guide the process.
3. Parents of prospective Confirmandi are invited to attend an orientation gathering where they are welcomed by the pastor and introduced to those who will be guiding the adolescent Confirmation journey. This gathering clearly presents the expectations of adolescent Confirmation and introduces the key elements of the preparation model. It is facilitated so as to engage the parent's own spirituality and encourage their support and participation in future sessions, activities and in the family home as partners in the process.
4. The pastor and/or parish Confirmation coordinator host an initial interview or *visit* with each candidate and one or both of their parents to welcome them and *listen* as they share their hopes, expectations and/or anxieties about the process. This initial visit is an opportunity to reassure, answer questions and begin establishing trust.
5. Candidates participate in a *Promise Ritual* where they are formally presented to and welcomed by their parish faith community—ideally during a Eucharistic liturgy at or near the beginning of their preparation journey. Alternatively, a special prayer service is planned for the close of the parent/candidate orientation gathering.
6. Parents and candidates are given detailed information concerning the role of a sponsor at either the orientation gathering or as part of the initial interview. Included are specific sponsor requirements and expectations to help ensure whomever a candidate chooses is able to journey with them and fully participate—offering guidance, support and friendship. Sponsors are chosen and welcomed during a special session designed to help them understand their role and encourage their participation in the process.
7. Parish sponsors and guides are identified and invited to make a two-year commitment to a small group of young people helping them prepare for Confirmation and modeling Catholic values and faith practices. Parents and/or godparents of Confirmandi are to be especially considered for this role.

FORMS

Best Practices

1. A parish adolescent Confirmation model is designed which responsibly forms high school age young people as faithful disciples, grateful stewards and active evangelists.
2. The Archdiocesan Offices of Catholic Faith Formation and Youth and Young Adult Ministry help to identify priests, deacons, and lay ecclesial ministers who are especially gifted presenters and/or facilitators inviting their participation at candidate, parent, and/or sponsor gatherings for an agreed upon stipend.
3. Catechetical sessions are designed and facilitated in a manner that is engaging, enjoyable and informational—using scripture, simple stories, art, symbols and objects as appropriate. The sessions highlight specific faith themes supporting the six tasks of catechesis, as well as Christian initiation and Catholic identity. During the immediate preparation stage scripture, elements and symbols of the Rite of Confirmation itself (i.e., the Easter Candle, water, chrism, incense, etc.) are incorporated into formation sessions.
4. Parish Confirmation coordinators attend the Archdiocesan annual Chrism Day program. Candidates and their parents and/or sponsors attend annual Chrism Day Liturgy.
5. In designing adolescent Confirmation sessions/activities/experiences, Confirmation ministers use a Shared Christian Praxis Approach combined with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and Archdiocesan Religious Education Curriculum Learner Benchmarks to assess effectiveness.
6. Catechesis and youth ministry guides young people in recognizing, appreciating and developing their special gifts in a way which helps them embrace a genuinely Christian understanding of life. Sessions/activities/experiences include specific opportunities for young people to identify and appreciate what it means to affirm and utilize their personal giftedness to serve the Lord.

FORMS. cont.

Best Practices

7. Catechesis and youth ministry emphasize the responsibilities of discipleship and focuses on the life and ministry of Jesus—specifically *doing* in imitation of Christ. Service opportunities and experiences are planned which teach and affirm the corporal and spiritual works of mercy engaging young people in serving others—especially the least among us. Activities and outreach take young people beyond their immediate setting connecting them with impressive people and organizations who model what it means to be a faithful disciple, grateful steward and active evangelist.
8. Rituals at liturgical celebrations (and formation sessions) mark a young person’s deepening faith and affirm the acceptance and support of their parish faith community. A well-planned preparation journey includes, at a minimum, *promise and covenant rituals* to welcome, bless and affirm candidates as they prepare for Confirmation.
9. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is made available to candidates, parents, families and sponsors with special attention given to reintroducing appropriate practice of the sacrament. During the sacramental preparation stage—prior to celebration of Confirmation—candidates, parents and sponsors come together to pray, reflect and celebrate Reconciliation.
10. The parish Confirmation preparation model recognizes responsibility for determining readiness to celebrate the sacrament rests ultimately with the candidate. It takes seriously the role of systematic catechesis in faith formation and provides candidates, parents and sponsors with specific criteria *they are to use* in determining readiness.
11. The sacramental preparation stage includes a *closure interview* between the candidate and a member of the parish Confirmation preparation team (i.e., pastor, Confirmation minister, youth minister, etc.). The focus of this interview is assessing a candidate’s general attitude, readiness and affirming their desire to be Confirmed.
12. A *prayerful* rehearsal is held prior to celebration of the sacrament for candidates and sponsors to review the major actions of the Rite, as well as appropriate celebration protocol for the liturgy (i.e., respecting worship space, dress, photography and related instruction concerning liturgical guidelines).

5. Builds Relationship

Best Practices

1. Parishes build and sustain relationships between candidates and the faith community through regular bulletin announcements, gathering space displays, general intercessions and related communication informing the parish community of candidate progress and need.
2. The parish encourages the interaction and involvement of candidates, parents, sponsors and parish Confirmation ministers and volunteers and includes *at least one opportunity for candidates to share a meal together*.
3. Retreats and days/evenings of reflection are planned offering candidates, as well as their parents and sponsors, time away to reflect on their faith experiences and to deepen their relationship with Jesus and each other. All young people participate *in a least one retreat* during the sacramental period of preparation.
4. Opportunities for shared prayer and worship between candidates and their parents, sponsors, and the full parish community are nurtured and every effort is made to connect young people with each other and their larger community through worship, prayer, study, social activities and service.

6. Celebrated as a Parish Liturgy

Best Practices

1. Confirmation is celebrated in the parish of the candidate during the normal Sunday Eucharist. Permission of the Archbishop is required for a celebration to occur in a location other than a church.
2. The Archbishop is the ordinary minister of Confirmation and may grant delegation to his auxiliary bishops.
3. The adolescent preparation journey presents the Confirmation liturgy in relationship with other parish initiation liturgies—specifically the Easter Vigil and the celebrations of infant Baptism and First Eucharist. Candidates and their families are encouraged to experience these liturgies at their parish during the year preceding conferral of the sacrament.

4. The Archdiocesan Liturgy Office assists local parishes in planning the Confirmation liturgy and provides final approval on all liturgical planning. The Confirmation Liturgy is composed of several movements, including:

ENTRANCE RITE—procession of Bishop, ministers and, when possible, the candidates themselves, is accompanied by strong music and led by elements announcing this as an initiation liturgy: the Easter Candle, a bowl of water for the rite of blessing and sprinkling of holy water, and a large container of chrism. The sacred scriptures and burning incense might also be included. These elements are prominently displayed, with the word reverently placed for all to see on the altar. The altar is revered, the Sign of the Cross is made and a greeting is exchanged between the celebrant and the assembly. Baptism is called to mind during the sprinkling rite (which replaces the penitential rite) and the celebrant invites the assembly to pray together, then prays aloud in the name of all. The assembly is then seated to prepare to hear the scriptures.

LITURGY OF THE WORD—silence, the Word proclaimed, a sung response and quiet time for reflection (recently Confirmed candidates are to be invited and prepared to serve as lectors for this liturgy). A cantor leads the assembly in sung prayer; a lector strongly proclaims the scriptures.

RITE OF CONFIRMATION—encompassing these six major actions:

1. Presentation of the candidates.
2. Homily and/or instruction by the celebrant.
3. Renewal of baptismal promises.
4. Laying on of hands.
5. Anointing with chrism.
6. General intercessions.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER AND CELEBRATION—the newly Confirmed are immediately led to the Eucharist table, reminding the assembly that Christian initiation is a process of growth into the Eucharistic community.

CLOSING BLESSING—the celebrant blesses the newly Confirmed and invites all assembled to go in peace. Strong and jubilant music accompanies the Bishop, ministers and candidates as they process out of the worship space.

5. A reception is held for the newly Confirmed, their families, sponsors, friends, and the faith community. Young people currently in the *proximate stage* of the Confirmation preparation journey—with help from their parents—host this reception.
6. Parish bulletins list the names of the newly Confirmed and a special gathering space exhibit is prominently displayed highlighting their full Christian initiation journey.
7. Registration of the conferral of Confirmation takes place in accord with the requirements of *CIC*, c. 895 and the sacramental records policy of the Archdiocese of Seattle regardless of immigration or legal standing of the candidate or their family. Notification of the conferral of Confirmation must be sent the candidate's church of baptism.

7. Supports the Newly Confirmed

Best Practices

1. The pastor and parish Confirmation preparation team send a personal note of congratulations to the newly Confirmed which includes an invitation to continue to worship, study and serve the parish—particularly as active members of youth ministry.
2. The newly Confirmed are recognized at and invited to serve as liturgical ministers for Pentecost Sunday.
3. The newly Confirmed are invited to serve the parish community in specific ways as lectors, ushers, catechetical assistants, musicians and through other liturgical and outreach ministries receiving the support they need to live out their faith as young Catholics.

These essential components and recommended best practices are not all inclusive. Rather, they offer parishes a framework for designing an adolescent Confirmation preparation journey responsive to their unique situation and setting. The expectation is parishes will incorporate as many of these practices as possible.

ADOLESCENT CONFIRMATION: Preparation Periods

Invitational Period (Proximate)	Welcoming Period (Proximate)	Forming Period (Proximate)	Sacramental Period (Immediate)	Discipleship Period (Mission)
Personal Invitation from Pastor or Parish Representative	Parent/Candidate Orientation Parent/Candidate Listening Session Sponsor Chosen Welcoming sessions, activities and experiences build relationships and community Communication with candidates and parents to preview Year I Formation sessions, activities and experiences Communication with candidates and parents to encourage regular worship and prayer	Formation sessions, activities and experiences support Archdiocesan Learner Outcomes, the Six Tasks of Catechesis and Catholic identity Formation sessions, activities and experiences affirm personal giftedness Group justice/service/reflection experiences Candidate/Sponsor Evening of Reflection or Retreat	Sacramental sessions, activities and experiences highlight scripture, elements and symbols of the Rite of Confirmation Sacramental sessions, activities and experiences emphasize personal prayer and witness Individual <i>and</i> group justice/service/reflection experiences Candidate Retreat Candidate Closure Interview Reconciliation Celebrated Chrism Liturgy Confirmation Rehearsal	Pentecost Sunday and Reflection Session Active in Youth Ministry Parish involvement through worship, study and service Parish registration Youth Scripture Study

Faith Themes	Faith Themes	Faith Themes	Faith Themes	Faith Themes
Christian Initiation	Baptism Confirmation Eucharist Baptismal Catechumenal	The life and ministry of Christ Jesus Knowledge of the Faith Liturgy /Sacraments Moral Formation Prayer Church Missionary Spirit Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy Catholic Social Tradition Catholic Identity—discipleship, stewardship and evangelization	Confirmation Christian Initiation Catholic Identity—discipleship, stewardship and evangelization Reconciliation Pentecost	Catholic Identity—discipleship, stewardship and evangelization

Time Frame	Time Frame	Time Frame	Time Frame	Time Frame
Ordinary Time September October November	Lenten Season	Ordinary Time Year I	Ordinary Time Year II and/or Lenten Season Celebration: Easter Season (usually)	Ongoing

Blessings Rituals	Blessings Rituals	Blessings Rituals	Blessings Rituals	Blessings Rituals
	Promise Ritual Renewal of Baptismal Promises	Covenant Ritual Sponsor Blessing	Affirmation Ritual Confirmation Rite	

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The Parish Model and Best Practices recommended in this Source Book were informed and inspired by a review of the Adolescent Confirmation Protocols of U.S. Archdiocese, specifically:

Baltimore, Cincinnati, Dubuque, Houston-Galveston, Indianapolis and Los Angeles.

All scripture passages are taken from *The Catholic Youth Bible*, Saint Mary's Press, Winona, MN, 2001.

APPENDICES

1. **Archdiocese of Seattle Adolescent Confirmation Guidelines at a Glance**
2. **Archdiocese of Seattle Adolescent Confirmation Liturgical Guidelines**
3. ***Promise, Covenant, and Affirmation* Ritual Templates**
4. **Religious Education Curriculum Learner Outcomes for Grade 7**
5. **Religious Education Curriculum Learner Outcomes for Grade 8**
6. **USCCB and Archdiocesan-Approved Resources for Adolescent Confirmation**
7. **A Shared Christian Praxis Approach**
8. **Young Catholics as Grateful Stewards**
9. **Formation for Love and Chastity**