

Supporting Your Teen Through Confirmation Preparation

The time of Confirmation preparation provides an opportunity for us, as parents, to make a close and lasting connection with our son or daughter relating to his/her faith. As parents, we should not miss this chance to share in our child's journey toward Confirmation. This is a time in their lives when you can have a profound impact. Here are some suggestions that you might find helpful:

1. Talk Together

- a. Discuss your faith openly with your child.
 - i. Talk about when you have felt close to God, and what has helped you to maintain a strong faith. Discuss your gratitude for blessings and how having a strong faith has helped you in life. Talk about why you like being a member of a faith community.
 - ii. Tell him/her about your faith journey, including times when you struggled with your faith in God. Teens have many questions and often worry about whether it's "normal" to sometimes have doubts. Let your teen know that you, too, walked this road, even though it involved different challenges. Be open. Be forthcoming.
- b. Have these discussions at a time when your son/daughter seems most "open" to them, whether it's while hiking or walking, sitting together at Starbucks, while throwing a baseball back and forth, or sitting outside gazing at the night sky. Teens respond better when they are most comfortable, and they'll be more receptive to what we have to say if they don't feel forced to listen.
- c. Engage in discussions about the material being studied in their class sessions, including sharing your own understanding and perspective.

- d. Praise your child for having reflected upon and deciding to receive the sacrament of Confirmation. Tell him/her what you hope this sacrament will mean in his/her life.

2. Reinforce Church Teachings

- a. Help your teen become aware that Confirmation is not the end of their religious experience, but the beginning of their lifetime commitment to God and the church.
- b. Make every effort to ensure that your son/daughter attends each of our class sessions, as well as other organized activities such as our retreat, service projects, etc. Your support will reinforce that these events matter.
- c. Emphasize the importance of the sacrament of Confirmation by taking an active part in the celebration of Confirmation. Make sure that the focus of the day is on the Sacrament of Confirmation rather than the celebration you may be planning for after the Mass.
- d. Talk at home about the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Your child received these gifts from the Holy Spirit at Baptism. These gifts are strengthened in each young adult at the time of Confirmation. Each gift gives the believer a different attribute that will help them along in their spiritual journey. Those gifts are:
 - i. WISDOM: helps us see and understand God's plan for our life; like a light bulb that turns on and opens our minds
 - ii. UNDERSTANDING: helps us to untie the knots of our life; to straighten out our lives and to deal with our problems
 - iii. RIGHT JUDGMENT/GOOD COUNSEL: helps us to talk things over, to think things out and to seek guidance before making a decision

- iv. COURAGE/FORTITUDE: helps us to feel prepared and confident to stand up for that we believe and to stick to our principles
- v. KNOWLEDGE: helps us to know ourselves and the world around us, to know our faith and what our Church is all about
- vi. REVERENCE/PIETY: helps us to see God in everything around us and to treat other people and creation gently and with respect
- vii. WONDER/AWE/FEAR OF THE LORD: helps keep us awestruck by the power and beauty of God and awakens us to the wonder of God and creation

3. Participate in Mass –Taking part in Mass regularly as a family is so important! Let your son/daughter see that this is a priority for your family.

4. Pray for and with your child

- a. Pray for your child’s spiritual growth every day. It sounds like a no-brainer, but we often simply forget to do it, given the pace of everyday life and the various demands of our own lives. Even a prayer as simple as “God, please guide my son/daughter today” is powerful. Your prayer can be free flowing in your own words, or you can quietly or silently recite a prayer you learned as a child, such as the Hail Mary or the Our Father. The important thing is that you are praying for your child.
- b. Consider taking part in a retreat together. Our parish can provide suggested resources for retreat opportunities, or you

can design your own retreat afternoon! Take your child to a special place, away from home and the usual surroundings. If your child likes to journal, present him/her with a special journal book that can be used to write down personal thoughts to God, or to write about anything that is on their hearts.

- c. Write your son/daughter a letter, telling him/her what your hopes and prayers are for them at this time in their life. Give this letter to your teen shortly before or after they are confirmed. They will treasure it.

5. Take Part in Service Together

- a. Discuss with your son/daughter what you would like for them to get out of their service projects; discuss how you volunteered/served as a young person
 - i. Three steps to approach service
 1. Prepare--Choose and plan the project together
 2. Act--participate with your child in service
 3. Reflect--come back together afterward and discuss the experience you both had serving together, maybe over ice cream or a pizza.

6. Suggested Resources for You/Your Teen (these resources are available on Amazon.com or from the publisher's website)

- a. YOUCAT, short for Youth Catechism, contains the teachings of the church in language written specifically for teens. It's in a question-answer format, so you and your teen can look up any topic in the index and go straight to an understandable answer! The Foreword is written by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI and it's just beautiful. It is published by Ignatius Press.
- b. YOUCAT Prayer Book is an excellent prayer resource written specifically for teens. It's a great companion to the YOUCAT, and is also published by Ignatius Press.

- c. Prove It! The Catholic Teen Bible contains the Scriptures along with prayers and basics about the Catholic faith, along with the most common questions teens have about God, Jesus, Church, prayer and their own lives. This resource points teens to the places in the Bible where they can find the answers they are looking for. This Bible is published by Saint Jerome Press
- d. Heroes of the Bible is a great collection of stories that remind us that heroes do more than just fight monsters. Sometimes, they hold the hands of people who are sick and lonely. They build schools. They comfort people who are mourning. Heroes are all around us...people who look at the world, see what needs to be done, and through the grace of God, find the strength to help others. Teens learn that with God's help, anyone can be a hero and make the world better. This book is published by Loyola Press.

As Confirmation draws nearer, perhaps the most important thing you can do is be present and let your son/daughter know you are there for support. We at Saint Hilary are blessed to share this journey with your families.