

Program Scope

The four units in the program focus on the following key themes.

Unit One: The Holy Spirit

In this unit, candidates reflect on the truth that a loving God created them and that he has a purpose and plan for their lives. Jesus calls us to follow him as disciples, and he gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit to strengthen and guide us on this path. Various symbols of the Holy Spirit are explored, along with their meanings, and the first step of the Rite of Confirmation, the *Presentation of the Candidates*, is discussed.

Unit Two: The Sacraments in the Life of the Church

This unit provides an overview of the Seven Sacraments, with particular focus on Baptism and its meaning in our lives. Sacraments are discussed in terms of their visible signs and their spiritual effects. This unit features an in depth discussion of grace and its necessity in the lives of disciples. Candidates are given an overview of the steps of the Rite of Confirmation, and the second step of the Rite of Confirmation, the *Renewal of Baptismal Promises*, is explored in detail.

Unit Three: The Order of Confirmation

This unit helps young people better understand Christ's Paschal Mystery and its connection to the Sacraments. Of particular focus is the Sacrament of Confirmation's connection to the other Sacraments of Initiation. The day of Pentecost is discussed, with connections drawn to Baptism and Confirmation. Youth explore the third step of the Rite of Confirmation, the *Laying on of Hands*. This unit also examines in detail the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit.



Unit Four: The Spirit-Filled Life

This unit explores the effects of the Sacrament of Confirmation and invites candidates to reflect on what it means to be Christ's witnesses in the world. The fourth step of the Rite of Confirmation, the *Anointing with Chrism*, is discussed in detail, with particular attention to its being the essential sign of the Rite of Confirmation that seals with the gift of the Holy Spirit and marks candidates with a permanent sign of God's favor.

About Confirmation

Sacrament of Confirmation: An Introduction

The Seven Sacraments are special celebrations of the Church and privileged encounters with God. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, “The sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us. The visible rites by which the sacraments are celebrated signify and make present the graces proper to each sacrament. They bear fruit in those who receive them with the required dispositions” (CCC, 1131). In other words, sacramental rites have visible signs of the action of God, and they also make present what they signify. God chooses to work in our lives through the Sacraments.

Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist are the three Sacraments of Initiation. Through them, we become full members of the Church. In Baptism, we are given new life in Christ. This life and grace is strengthened in Confirmation and nourished by the Eucharist. Confirmation completes the grace of Baptism and seals us with the gift of the Holy Spirit. We receive the grace to become more like Christ and to live as his disciples.

Celebration of the Rite of Confirmation

In every Sacrament, there are things we can see (the “visible rites”) and actions of God that they signify and make present. There are four steps in the Rite of Confirmation, which is ideally celebrated within Mass to show the connection among the Sacraments of Initiation.

The first step, called the Presentation of the Candidates, points to the obligation of the candidates to come prepared to the Sacrament. In this step, candidates express their desire to respond to God, who has chosen them and calls each of them by name.

In the second step of the rite, the Renewal of Baptismal Promises, candidates express their commitment to live the Christian life, to keep the promises their parents made for them when they presented them for Baptism. Following the formula of the renewal of baptismal promises, they commit themselves to reject evil and to profess and live the Christian faith as members of the Catholic Church.

In the third step of the rite, the Laying on of Hands, the bishop and any concelebrating priests extend their hands as the bishop prays, recalling the candidates’ Baptism and asking for the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is invoked to come down upon those being confirmed.



The final step of the rite is the Anointing with Chrism. This is the essential rite of the Sacrament by which Confirmation is conferred. Candidates are marked with an indelible (permanent) mark as a follower of Christ, by the laying on of hand and the words, “[Name], be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit” (CCC, 1300; see Rite of Confirmation, Introduction and 27).

Effects of the Sacrament

The effects of Confirmation are numerous. The Holy Spirit helps us witness to the Gospel, both in word and in action. We bond more closely to God the Father as his sons and daughters. Confirmation draws us more closely to Jesus, and it also perfects our bond with the Church—the Body of Christ. The effects connect us more closely with the mission of the Church—spreading and defending our faith.

Through the Sacrament of Confirmation, we are marked with an indelible mark—a permanent spiritual sign of God’s favor. We are sealed with the Gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety (reverence) and fear of the Lord (wonder and awe).

Life in the Spirit

Receiving all three Sacraments of Initiation means we are called to lives of discipleship and of continuing conversion. If we stay humble of heart and are open to God’s grace, the Holy Spirit helps us to become more like Jesus—to be the people God made us to be. We are called to be witnesses of Christ to a world that desperately needs his love. We do this both through our words and our actions. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit help us to fulfill this mission.

Unit-Specific Catechist Background

Each unit’s lesson plan begins with a Reflection on the Sacrament and unit themes. It also includes Scripture Background on the unit’s main Scripture passage treated in the Candidate’s Book.

Prayer Support

An important part of this program is to request and arrange for the prayerful support of the parish community on behalf of all those preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation. This may already take place or can be enhanced to coincide with this new program.

UNIT 1
Confirmation Preparation

The Holy Spirit

Reflection for Catechists

As Catholics, we believe in one God in Three Divine Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Of the three, people may feel they know the least about the Third Divine Person. This is ironic, since it is the Holy Spirit who is perhaps closest to us. Saint Paul tells us that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 6:19). It is this Person of God who dwells inside us, guiding us to do God’s will and interceding for us to the Father (see Romans 8:26–27).

The Holy Spirit helps us hear and follow God’s call in our lives. God calls each of us by name (see Isaiah 43:1), just as Jesus called each of his Apostles. Listening to and following God’s call is a lifelong process. It sometimes means going against what others expect of us, or even what we had planned for ourselves. It is within our God-given nature to seek happiness, but we often seek it in the wrong places. The only way to achieve true happiness is to do that for which we were created.

We learn and understand God’s plan for our lives as we grow in our friendship with him. This usually begins in an initial encounter with God, a moment of conversion in which we recognize our need for him and decide to give our lives to him. It continues as we listen to his voice, through Scripture, Sacred Tradition, the counsel of trusted friends and family, and the events and opportunities of our lives.

- How do prayer, the Sacraments, and obedience to God’s will help you grow closer to Christ?
- How do you continue to listen for God’s voice, so you can discern his call in your life?

Scripture Background

This unit opens with a passage from Psalm 139. Here, the psalmist praises the Creator for his life and because God knows his “very self.” God is with us at all times, guiding us according to his plan.

The primary Scripture passage used for this unit is Jesus’ calling of the disciples. In this passage, we can readily see that Jesus chose ordinary people. It is striking that he does not seek out disciples among the religious leaders of the day, for example, the scholars and teachers of the Law. Instead, he chooses fishermen, taxidermers, and even the tax collector. This drives home the point that God can use anyone. He calls whomever he will, and gives them what they need in order to fulfill the call.

Also featured is the connection between Isaiah 11 and Matthew 3—the promise that the Spirit of God would rest upon one of Jesus’s descendants and the promise fulfilled at the baptism of the Lord, when the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus.

HOW CANDIDATES UNDERSTAND THE LESSON

Middle school is a time of rapid growth—physically, intellectually, and emotionally. This growth prompts self-reflection and self-consciousness. It’s important for candidates this age to realize that, while we are all different, each one of us is wonderfully made, and we are all called by God to be a part of his work.

Discerning Our Call We often ask young people at this level what they would like to be, but we rarely ask where they feel God might be calling them. It’s important for us to realize that we can only be truly happy when we discern his call and pursue it.

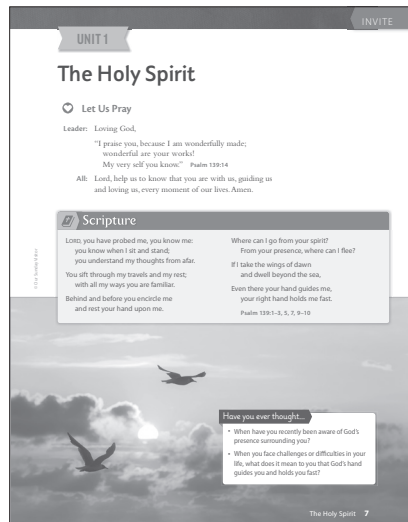
Choices They Make Help the Confirmation candidates appreciate that God knows each of them by name and wants to share his plan with them. Encourage them to consider how the choices they make move them closer to, or farther away from, what God has planned. This sometimes calls for difficult and drastic choices, such as when the first disciples left their lives behind and followed Jesus. At other times, it is choosing between something good . . . and something better.

Candidate Book Features

The book for youth contains four units, each 10 pages in length, and other important material to prepare for and reflect on the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Opening Material

The front of each Candidate Book offers spiritual guidance and encouragement in a welcome note from OSV. A prayer to the Holy Spirit and a reflection page for the candidate will help in living out the journey of discipleship.



Units

Each of the four units opens and closes with prayer. A scripture reflection process invites youth to discern God's voice and presence in their lives before beginning an exploration of unit themes. Activities and features help youth engage with the material, including unit reviews and study of a specific Saint whose life exemplifies the lesson.

Sacramental Resources at the Back of the Book

The Rite of Confirmation and celebrating the Sacrament are covered as well as information on the Rite of Reconciliation, an examination of conscience, information on Baptism and vocations, and a page on Catholic moral teaching. Catholic prayers and practices complete this resource section.

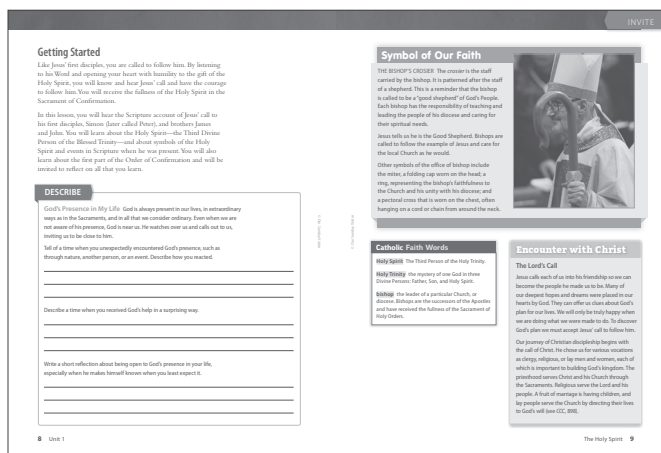


Unit Structure Each unit opens with prayer and Scripture as well as a feature titled, *Have you ever thought*, which helps the candidates connect God's Word with key themes of the unit.

The **Invite** section also gets youth started with an introduction and creative activity.

Youth then transition unit themes with the following recurring features:

- Symbol of Our Faith
- Catholic Faith Words
- Encounter with Christ



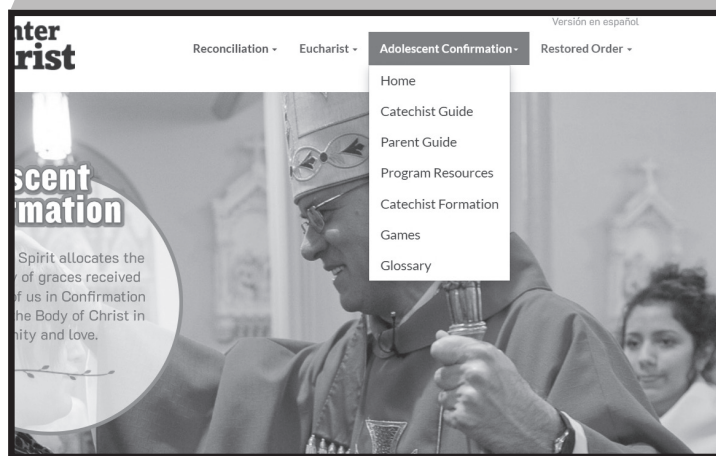
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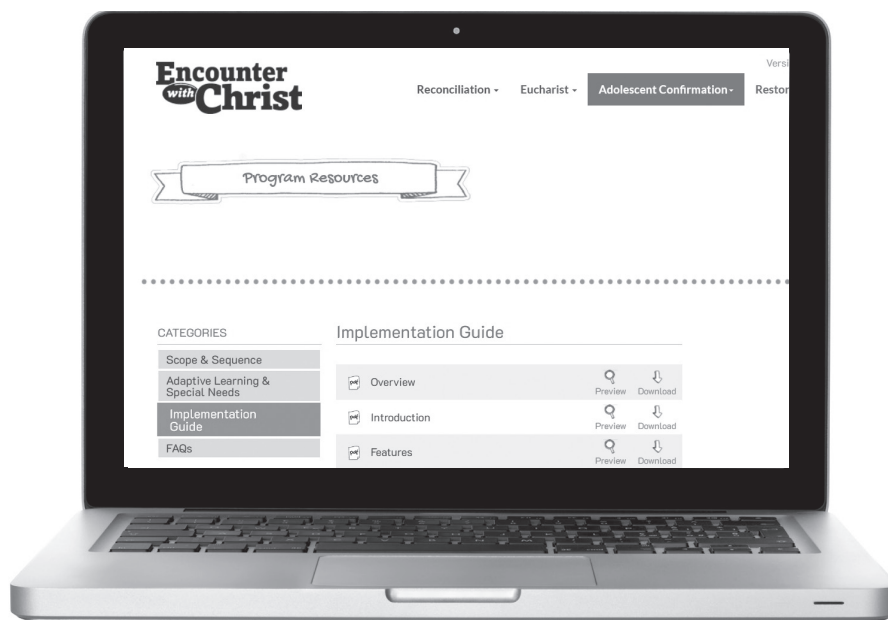
Confirmation Program Website



Home Page

The *Encounter with Christ Adolescent Confirmation Program* website features an easy-to-use navigation scheme, allowing users to navigate between the Catechist Guide, Parent Guide, Program Resources, Catechist Formation, Games and Glossary.

In the Program Resources section, the Implementation Guide is segmented into Overview, Introduction, Features, Website and Lesson Plan Process downloads.



Catechist Guide Page

Lesson Plans housed within the Catechist Guide Page include background and preparation as well as planning content and instruction. Lesson Plans can be previewed or downloaded.

