

The Basics about getting confirmed at St. Emily / St. Thomas Becket

Why get confirmed?

- You will be completing the sacraments of initiation in the Catholic church. You were probably baptized as a baby. Now, you have the opportunity to say “yes” to the baptismal promises your parents and godparents made for you before you could speak. Confirmation makes you a full member of the church.
- You will be “sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.” You welcome the gift of the Spirit and the gifts that the Spirit brings into your life. You are ‘sealed’ meaning that for the rest of your life you belong to Christ and the church.
- In the process of preparing for confirmation you get a better idea of what it means to be a full member of the church:
 - ▶ You find out **what** a full member of the church should **know**;
 - ▶ You find out **what** a full member of the church **believes**;
 - ▶ You find out **what** a full member of the church **does**.

Why not get confirmed?

- You don’t want to make a commitment to be a full member of the church right now. (The option to get confirmed is open to you until the day you die.)
- You don’t know that you believe what the church teaches.
- You don’t want to make the commitment to prepare.

Who gets to decide if you get confirmed?

YOU DO. Your parents may have decided to baptize you, but at this point in your life, you are the only one who can decide if you will get confirmed.

However, at this stage of your life, your parents do get to decide where you spend your time and what you learn. They may decide that you should participate in the preparation process and not make the decision now.

When it comes time to finally decide, the decision is up to you.

What is involved in preparing for confirmation?

- You come to mass on Sundays, participating with the rest of believing Catholics in the Eucharist.
- You participate in classes in religious education or school learning about the Scriptures, following Jesus as a disciple, morality, the Creed, and the faith of the church.
- You spend time practicing the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, taking the time to journal about them online.

- You will participate in a **confirmation retreat** in winter, 2022. The retreat is mandatory. The format and date will be communicated to you in fall, 2021.
- You will be confirmed in spring, 2022 by one of the bishops of the Archdiocese.

There is a fee that covers part of the parish's expenses for the program. It is \$50.00. This fee is payable in the fall of 2021.

Picking a Sponsor

Why sponsors?

In the first centuries of the church, when it was really odd to live the Christian way of life, a sponsor was the person who showed someone how. The person who asked to be baptized had to be trained and guided before baptism to know what being a Christian meant. Also, when the church was illegal, sponsors vouched for the new Christian, assuring the others that they were not allowing a spy into their group!

What kind of person should you think about?

Today, sponsors are still older guides in the faith. You should pick someone **who is a practicing Catholic** who can answer your questions about living as a Catholic Christian and be a mentor to you. You should also pick someone whose faith you admire and respect. They should be a role model for you.

Requirements to be a sponsor:

- He or she must be a baptized, confirmed Catholic at least sixteen years of age. (The reason that he or she must be Catholic is that you can't sponsor someone for membership in an organization to which you don't belong.) **He or she should be a member of a Catholic parish and either single or in a marriage recognized by the Church.**
- He or she **cannot** be the parent, step parent or adoptive parent of the confirmand. (Grandparents are OK.)
- You can ask your **godparents at baptism** to be your sponsor. In fact, this is a great idea, since confirmation is the sealing of what happened at baptism.
- Males can have female sponsors and females can have male sponsors. The sponsor and the confirmand do not have to be of the same gender.
- **We will have a form for the sponsor to fill out and return in the late fall of 2021.**

What does your sponsor have to do?

- At a minimum, your sponsor should be at the ceremony and present you to the bishop for confirmation. (If it is impossible for the sponsor to be there, ask about *proxies*.)
- The real role of the sponsor is to help you in the preparation process. He or she should talk over with you what you are learning and what you are getting out of the preparation. He or she should be available to answer your questions. He or she may even want to spend some time doing some service with you.

- Next fall the Religious Education office will send out some suggested activities / conversations for you and your sponsor.

When do you pick your sponsor?

- You might want to start thinking about it now.
- In the late fall of 2021, the Religious Education office will send you a link to fill out and tell us who your sponsor will be.

Picking a Patron Saint

There was a tradition in the first centuries of the Church that new Christians chose a new name when they were baptized. These names honored the saints, usually martyrs. People chose to call themselves the name of a saint in the hope that they would learn to live the same kind of a Christian life.

*Since most people are baptized as babies, their Christian names are chosen for them by their parents. **You can keep the name that they gave you then, if it is of a saint or a Christian virtue.** (This applies to your first name or middle name.) Or, **you can choose the name of another holy person or virtue**, as the early Christians did.*

Whether you pick a new patron saint, or find out about the one that you already have, you have to tell us something about that person.

Ways to begin

You may think, "How do I know where to start?" You may want to tackle this in any of the following ways:

- Look at the liturgical calendar and find out if your birthday is a saint's feast day. You can find the calendar at <https://www.franciscanmedia.org/source/saint-of-the-day/>
- Look for patron saints of something that you are interested in. (For example, St. Isidore of Seville is the patron saint of the internet!) See the web reference for the Patron Saints Index below or at <http://www.catholic.org/saints/patron.php>
- Browse and look for someone who did something that you think you would like to live up to. Here is the general site to look at: <http://www.catholic.org/saints/>
- We have these links on our Confirmation web page: www.stemilyreled.org and look under "Sacraments."

Books useful for research:

- Any Catholic encyclopedia. (You can find these at the public library.)
- Dictionaries of the saints. (Also available in the library. The one by Delaney is especially good.)
- Lives of the saints in collections.
- Come to the RE office and check out our resources.

When do I have to know my patron saint?

In the late fall of 2021, when we ask you for the name of your sponsor, we will also ask you for the name of your patron saint.

We will also ask you for an essay in either your school or Religious Education class which will include what you found out about your patron saint and why you chose him or her.

Doing the Works of Mercy

"Service" is often associated with preparing for Confirmation. There are two reasons for this.

- *First, you are older, and you are able to do more things independently.*
- *Second, living a life of service to others and doing the works of mercy is what the Christian life is about.*

As you go through the year, we are going to ask you to journal about how and when you performed the works of mercy. This is not because this is the only time in your life in which you do them. It is because reflecting on what you did and what you learned will help you to continue to live a life of mercy as you go forward.

What we will expect of you during these years of preparation:

There is not a minimum of what you 'must' do. We will be looking for a few things:

- A sincere effort;
- Variety and trying to do something you have not done before;
- A combination of things you do as part of a group or community and things you do on your own;
- A sincere reflection on the experience in your journal pages.

Why am I completing this journal?

We are convinced of two things:

- Christian service is a lifelong process. Followers of Jesus are supposed to follow his example. *If you want to be great, you must be the servant of all the others. And if you want to be first, you must be everyone's slave. The Son of Man did not come to be a slave master, but a slave who will give his life to rescue many people.* (Mark 10:43-45)
- When you think of others and act on their behalf, you learn from the experience. The journal is a way to reflect on the experience.

What is it based on?

It is based on the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. You may have memorized these lists in fourth grade or so. Now is the time to make sure they are part of your lifestyle!

Read this passage from Scripture:

Matthew 25

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne,
and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.'

Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?'

And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'

Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink,
a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.'

Then they will answer and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?'

He will answer them, 'Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.' And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

Jesus told us that we will be judged on what we have done for others - and therefore for him. The questions on the 'final exam' are clear to us. Instead of studying for this exam, we should get into the habit of doing. This goes on through your whole life.

Corporal Works of Mercy

The Corporal Works of Mercy are these kind acts by which we help our neighbors with their material and physical needs.

- feed the hungry
- give drink to the thirsty
- clothe the naked
- shelter the homeless
- visit the sick
- visit the imprisoned
- bury the dead

Spiritual Works of Mercy

The Spiritual Works of Mercy are acts of compassion, as listed below, by which we help our neighbors with their emotional and spiritual needs.

- counsel the doubtful
- instruct the ignorant
- admonish sinners
- comfort the afflicted
- forgive offenses
- bear wrongs patiently
- pray for the living and the dead

In 2016, Pope Francis added to each of these traditional lists in his encyclical, *Laudato Si'*:

- care for the earth

What do you want me to do?

- We want you to go through your life thinking about how you can be of service. So, look through all the Works of Mercy and be aware of things that you can do in many of the 'categories.'
- There are no time requirements to fulfill. Some things will take five minutes; some may take a long term commitment of weeks or months. (For example, tutoring a younger child.)
- We want you to do a variety of things. You may like or favor one activity, but look through the list and think of ways to do various things.
- ***As we deal with restrictions during the Covid-19 emergency, think of ways you can be a merciful and loving person around your home, in your daily life.***

I can't do things like visit people in jails!

Ah! **Here is your chance to think creatively!** For example, you can do some research on prisoners of conscience, held because of their political beliefs. Write a letter to their government asking for their freedom. Find out about why the Catholic church opposes the death penalty. Check with the National Coalition Against the Death Penalty (www.ncadp.org) or the Catholic Mobilizing Network (www.catholicmobilizing.org) to see if there are letter writing campaigns to governors on behalf of prisoners awaiting execution. Even if you can't go to jails, you can be aware of issues of justice and injustice in our world, and get involved by making your opinion known.

There are other ways to get involved other than to do direct service. You can give money that you earn, for example. Direct service is important and you should do things that directly help people, but it is not the only avenue for being a disciple.

What about things like just helping around the neighborhood?

Those count too! For example, if you rake the lawn of an elderly neighbor, in a way it is visiting the ill, as well as caring for the earth. (Or at least letting your youthful strength substitute for old creaky bones!)

What are the larger group experiences that will be available?

These might resume after the Covid-19 emergency. We live in hope!

There are a lot of possibilities in our parishes and local neighborhoods. Among them are:

- **Catholic Charities** meals on Tuesdays. Please contact David Mika at dmika@stemily.org to arrange your participation on weeks St. Emily serves the meal.
- **Feed My Starving Children** Pack and ship food to kids in areas where there is famine. You can go as a group or as a family. www.fmsc.org. 1072 National Parkway, Schaumburg, IL 60173, 847-519-9614. We also have reserved spots several times a year. Contact David Mika at dmika@stemily.org to find out dates.
- **Project Exodus** We will be collecting the items to help furnish apartments for refugee families resettling in the United States. Help will be needed to collect, sort and tally, and take the items to the family's new apartment and welcome them to our country.
- **Vacation Bible School** There are lots of volunteer opportunities the at the end of July helping younger children learn about the stories of the Bible. We'll let you know the full details in a few months.
- **Sunday School** Preschoolers and kindergarten students have a class on Sunday mornings at 9:30 AM. You can work under the direction of the lead teacher. Contact the RE office for details in the summer.
- **Parish opportunities** These include regular volunteer opportunities at both St. Emily and St. Thomas Becket - altar serving, helping with dinners and picnics, and other events.
- **Visiting at Presence Nazarethville** The activities department at Presence Nazarethville, a skilled nursing facility in Des Plaines welcomes middle schoolers for help with activities and visiting with the residents. This would be a great summer activity, as many of the games and events they run happen before lunch. They also have weekend events. You can volunteer on your own. You can also organize a small group to go there. Contact Carm Retzke at 847-493-4431
- **Working with the elderly at Citadel Healthcare** in Northbrook. They are eager to have your help visiting, helping to run bingo and with craft projects. Contact JillianAltosino, Life Enrichment Director at 847-795-9700 or jaltosino@citadelhealthcare.com.

What if I am still stuck?

Ask your sponsor for ideas. Ask your family. Ask your teachers. Ask the parish staff.

How do I fill out the journal?

- Go to this link: <http://stemily.net/index.php/works-of-mercy-form/> You can also find the link on the Confirmation web page. Go to www.stemilyreled.org and look under 'Sacraments'

- Fill out the fields on the page.
- You can use your phone or tablet, so bookmark the link.
- We will receive a copy of your report - and you will, too. You don't need to turn it in to us in any other form, but save your reports in case something goes wrong with the tech.
- We want you to write **reflectively** about a) what you did; b) how much time you spent; c) what you learned.
- Answers like "I learned a lot" or "This was a good experience" are **NOT** reflective answers. They are short, unthoughtful answers! We expect you to tell us what happened and what it meant to you!
- **How many journal entries do I have to fill out?** There is no real minimum and certainly no maximum. However, less than one a month is not very much and doesn't show evidence that you are thinking about preparation very much.

Menu of Mercy

Works of Mercy I am doing and will continue to do:

Works of Mercy I would like to do during this time of preparation:

A Work of Mercy I have never done that would be interesting and adventurous for me:
