



# Candidate's Handbook

The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.

—John 14:26

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Candidate's Name



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# Candidate's Handbook

*Confirmed in a Faithful Community*

A Senior High Confirmation Process

Third Edition

Thomas Zanzig

Maura Thompson Hagarty

Saint Mary's Press®

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# Welcome!

## About This Handbook

This book has been created to make your experience of the process of preparation for Confirmation more enjoyable, fruitful, and memorable. Here's what you will find in this handbook:

### Summaries and Additional Insights

The core of each chapter is the summary of the content presented during the Confirmation sessions. The summaries will help you track the program's content, recall information as you need it, or catch up on material if you happen to miss a session.

You are encouraged to read and reflect on the material beyond the formal sessions. Take time at home to read, reflect, and pray on what you are learning in preparation for the reception of the sacrament.

### A Chance to Think and Share

The handbook includes a number of short writing exercises—some intended to be strictly personal, such as the journal-writing exercises, and others to be worked on with the other candidates in your group. During the sessions your leader will give you instructions on when and how to complete those exercises, but if your leader does not direct you to do all of them, you may want to do them on your own when you get a chance.

### An Invitation to Pray

Prayer is a central part of the process of preparation for Confirmation. This handbook includes resources for both personal and group prayer. Your leader will use many of these resources during the group prayer services that are part of most sessions. Again, if your leader skips some sessions, you might want to privately read the prayers from the skipped sessions.

### Catholic Quick Facts

Beginning on page 125 of this handbook is a particularly helpful resource—a special section on major Catholic beliefs and practices. Here you'll find summaries of key Church teachings, a collection of traditional and popular Catholic prayers, and definitions of common terms—many probably familiar, some likely new to you. Sometimes your leader will refer directly to this material. More often, though, you'll find this resource helpful when you need a quick answer to a question about Catholic life and practice.



### **The Catholic Connection**

A recurring feature of this handbook is the Catholic Connection. The Catholic faith is remarkably rich, so much so that in this program, we can barely scratch the surface of the many beliefs and practices that distinguish Catholics. We have to make sure we cover “the basics” of Catholicism. The Catholic Connection essays provide additional insights into how Catholics understand and celebrate those basics. Occasionally during the sessions, the leader may refer to these sections and comment on them. More often, though, you will be encouraged to read and reflect on them on your own.



### **Heart Links**

Sprinkled throughout the handbook are brief readings, poems, and short stories that relate to the themes under discussion. They are intended to catch your attention, to provoke thought, or to offer additional insights. Sometimes they’re just for fun! If you find yourself stuck for an idea during the times set aside for journal writing, try browsing through the Heart Links for inspiration. To find them, look for the link icon.



### **Bible Bytes**

Some verses or passages from the Bible are so significant and memorable that we want you to take special note of them. That’s what the Bible Bytes are for. Whenever you see one, take a minute to read it. Some day when you need them most, you may “hear” these verses echoing from your memory bank.



### **Catechism Quotes**

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is a valuable resource for learning about the Catholic faith. Though it is intended primarily as a reference for bishops, priests, and others who are charged with the task of teaching, laypeople have found it inspirational as well. Throughout this handbook we use excerpts from the *Catechism* to shed additional light on a topic and to provoke thought.

### **Something to Catch Your Eye . . . and Mind**

We hope this book becomes important to you and helps make your Confirmation preparation a special experience. Remember, too, that you’ll be able to keep the handbook at the end of the Confirmation process. So consider it a record and keep-sake of the whole experience, one that we hope will be of lasting value to you.







## Period of Invitation

In this process of preparation for Confirmation, it is important to remember that it is Christ who is the sacrament of our salvation, which we experience through the life of the Church. The sacrament of Confirmation is an efficacious sign of God's grace—that is, the sacrament effects change in us and in the world because of God's power, not our own. The sacrament imparts to the baptized person the fullness of the Holy Spirit, and God's grace bears fruit in our life when those who receive it have the proper inner attitude and readiness. The celebration of the sacrament, in the visible rite, signifies and makes present this grace.

Having already been baptized and received first Eucharist, you now begin preparation for Confirmation with the period of invitation. During these sessions you'll get to know your leader and fellow candidates. You will learn about the meaning of faith and the Church. You also will have an opportunity to reflect on God's call to have faith and to continue the mission of Jesus Christ through full and active membership in the Church. At the end of the period of invitation, you will be invited to continue on your lifelong faith journey by participating in additional sessions designed to help you prepare for Confirmation.

## Personal Uniqueness: Promise and Pain



When I look at your heavens,  
the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars that  
you have established;  
what are human beings that  
you are mindful of them,  
mortals that you care for them?  
Yet you have made them a little  
lower than God,  
and crowned them with glory  
and honor.  
You have given them dominion over  
the works of your hands;  
you have put all things  
under their feet.

—Psalm 8:3–6

About six billion people now live on this big blue marble that we know as Earth. Some have estimated that since the beginning of recorded history, the world has felt the footsteps of over one hundred billion people. The numbers alone are staggering, but listen to this: In the entire history of humanity, no two people have ever been exactly alike.

Each person is unique and therefore special and important. That uniqueness is a gift from God the Father, the creator of everything that exists. All people are called to share in God's own life and to respond to him with love. Because of this relationship, every person has profound dignity and value.

### But There's a Downside

Though our origin in God gives us genuine value and dignity as persons, we can forget who—and whose—we are. Sometimes we experience a sense of being lost, confused, unsure about the meaning and value of life, or deeply lonely. Some of these personal struggles, we must admit, we bring on ourselves. We might spend too much time wishing we were someone else, regretting what we think we're missing in life, and envying others who seem to have it all. At other times feelings of doubt, anxiety, and loneliness seem to overtake us when we feel confused about what we're supposed to do in a certain situation, unsure of our abilities, or insecure about the meaning of our life.

At still other times, however, the feelings we experience go much deeper. We feel an ache in our heart when we least expect it, or maybe we feel all alone in the middle of a crowd of people. We might be haunted by the thought that life has little meaning or purpose, or that we are insignificant in an immense universe.

That recurring sense of emptiness in life reflects the deepest hunger of the human heart—the hunger for God. All human beings yearn for union with God, the One who loved them into existence, and they ache when separated from him. This sense of separation—from God, from others, even from ourselves—is at times an expression of the reality of sin, which we will discuss in greater depth later in this program (see pages 51–55). But something even more basic is at work here. Over fifteen hundred years ago, Saint Augustine described this experience as well as anyone ever has: “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.”

## Being Human

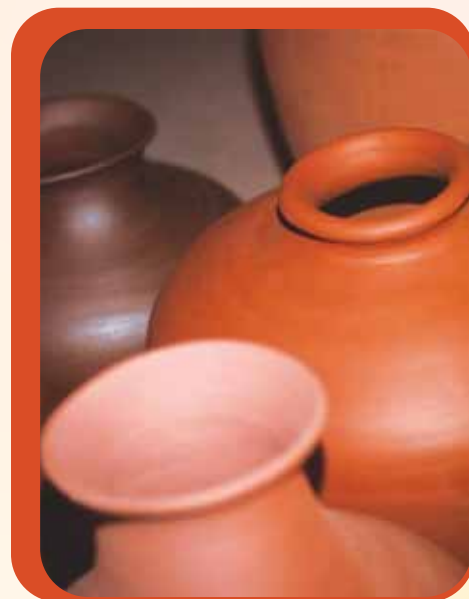
Here in a nutshell is what God has revealed to us about the nature of humanity:

- All people have dignity and value that comes from God. He created the universe out of goodness and love and yearns to be in relationship with all his creatures, but especially with human beings.
- We've been created with the ability and option to cooperate with God's will for our lives and for the world or to turn away from him in sin. All too often we choose the latter.
- God the Father sent his only Son to save us from sin and make eternal life possible for us. Jesus Christ, true God and true man, fully reveals his Father and makes a deep, loving relationship with him possible. This is "redemption."
- Following Jesus's death, Resurrection, and Ascension from the world, the Holy Spirit inspires us and guides us to holiness.
- We are called by God to live out the Gospel message and continue Jesus's mission in the world by joining with others in the Church. The Church is in fact the Body of Christ present in the world today, a community enlivened by the Holy Spirit and dedicated to the reign of the Father's love over all creation.
- We are caught up in the very life of the one God, who has revealed himself to us as the Trinity— Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We live with the hopeful anticipation that after we die, we will be united with God in a complete and perfect way.

All these marvelous truths will be explored in depth during the process of preparation for Confirmation.

### The Process of Preparation at a Glance

You may not experience a "restless heart" as you enter the process of preparation for Confirmation. Each candidate brings his or her own life story to the journey of preparation. The process you are about to begin is designed to help you reflect on and come to terms with many of the big questions of life. In the company of your fellow candidates and with the guidance of leaders in your parish community of faith, you will learn the answers that God has revealed to some of the great mysteries of life: Why are we here? Who is Jesus Christ, and what does he reveal about the meaning of life? How do I experience the presence of God in my life? Why does the Church exist, and why is belonging to it so important?



Yet, O LORD, you are our Father;  
we are the clay, and you are our potter;  
we are all the work of your hand.

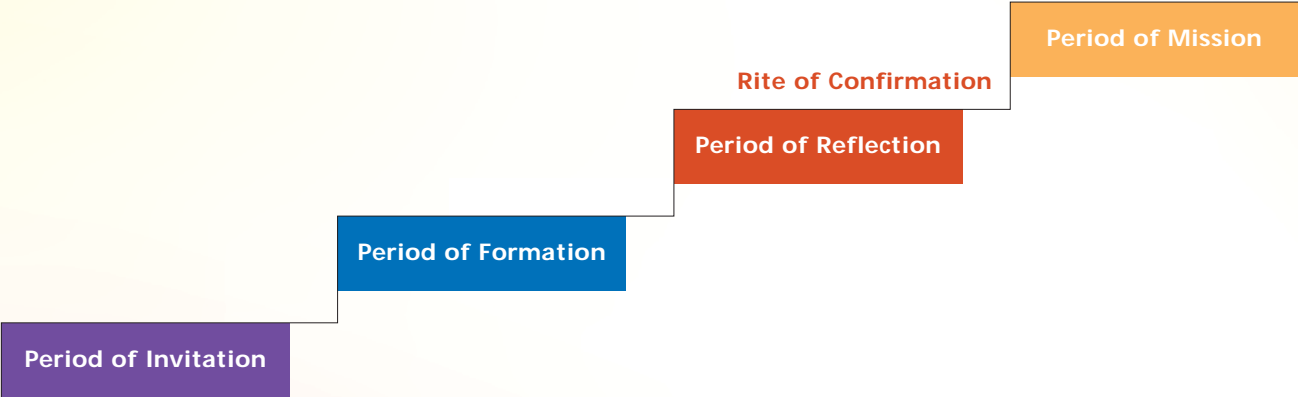
—Isaiah 64:8



The desire for God is written in the human heart.

—Catechism, no. 27

The chart below summarizes the process of preparation for Confirmation. Your leader will explain the significance of each step in the process. We invite you to enter into the journey toward Confirmation with honesty and openness. Be ready to share your convictions, your questions, your feelings, your longings. You may be surprised by what God has in store for you. Let the adventure begin!



# Identity: Looking for the Real You

Who are you? What is your image of yourself? Do you think of yourself as a unique creature of God, endowed with gifts and talents? Is it easier to think of others in this way than it is to think of yourself in this way?

During this session you will have an opportunity to consider these questions and reflect on why you perceive yourself the way you do.

## You Are Salt and Light

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said to his disciples: "You are the salt of the earth. . . . You are the light of the world." Read Matthew 5:13–16 in the "Bible Byte" to the right.

When Jesus's listeners imaged the words *salt of the earth*, they would have thought of an oven because salt was used to ignite the fuel used to heat ovens. Wood was not plentiful enough to be used as fuel. Instead, they used something that was readily available: animal dung. They collected it and molded it into patties, which were then salted and left to dry in the sun. On the oven floor, they would place a block of salt, which functioned as a catalyst, enabling the dung patties to catch on fire. After being in use for a while, the salt block would lose its ability to set the fuel afire and would no longer be good for anything except to be "thrown out" onto the road and "trampled under foot."

Jesus's affirming words challenge us to see ourselves as salt, that is, as a catalyst that kindles fires. Of course, we are not talking about literal fires here. Jesus is talking about the fire of his Father's love that binds people together through his Spirit into communities that can transform the world.

When Jesus says, "You are the light of the world," he again affirms his listeners. Light is an image that is used frequently in the Scriptures to symbolize the loving presence of God. Jesus is telling us who we are in terms of God's love. A human being who is light is one who is loved by God and shares that love with everyone. Jesus's incredible affirmation quickly leads to a command: "Let your light shine." Everyone has this God-given potential to be the light of Christ for another person, with the help of the Holy Spirit.



"You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

"You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."

—Matthew 5:13–16



The LORD is gracious and  
merciful,

slow to anger and abounding in  
steadfast love.

The LORD is good to all,  
and his compassion is over all that  
he has made.

All your works shall give thanks to  
you, O LORD,  
and all your faithful shall bless  
you.

They shall speak of the glory of your  
kingdom,  
and tell of your power,  
to make known to all people your  
mighty deeds,  
and the glorious splendor of your  
kingdom.

Your kingdom is an everlasting  
kingdom,  
and your dominion endures  
throughout all generations.

—Psalm 145:8–13

## Conflicting Messages

Sometimes we hear loud and clear messages that contradict what God has revealed about the value and potential of human beings. These messages come from all over the place: pressure from peers to conform, television shows, movies, advertisements, magazines, the criteria for giving awards to individuals at school and in our communities, and so on. They can drown out God's voice and lead us to view ourselves and others with a mistaken set of values. For example, they can draw us into placing too much value on physical appearance, the things we own, and being number one. Sometimes these messages take the form of stereotypes that keep us from seeing people—even ourselves—the way they really are. When we let these competing messages have power over us, the effect can be likened to keeping salt from sparking fires and putting bushel baskets over lights. The true God-given dignity and giftedness of human beings becomes overshadowed by things that do not have lasting value.

## In God's Image

As you search to better understand yourself and to figure out the purpose of your life, try to keep these things in mind: You have been created in the image of God. At your baptism you received the remission of original sin and you also received the grace to begin a new life in Christ. This means, for one thing, that you are full of goodness. In your own unique way, you reflect, like a ray of light, God's goodness and wisdom. God willed you into existence because he loves you. He will never leave you alone. We cannot truly understand who we are apart from God.

## Letting Your Light Shine

Read through the following list and check all the things on the list that show how God's light shines through you.

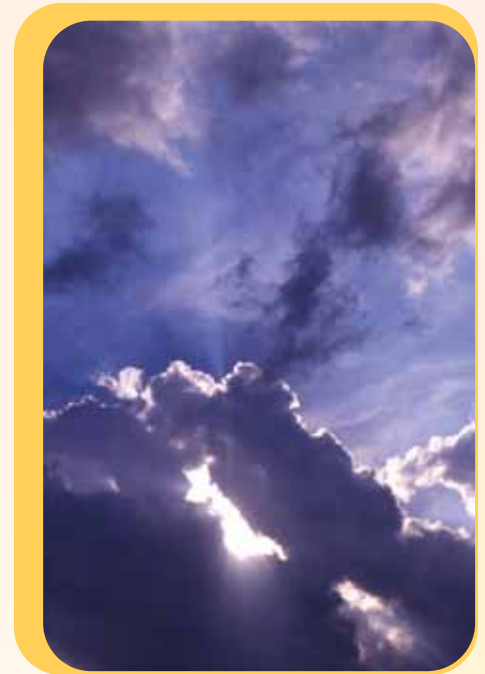
Circle the boxes in front of the three things you are most proud of right now.

Shade in the box before the one item you really want to work on, starting today. Think of one concrete way to improve in that area.



## God's light shines through me in . . .

- ☐ my choice of friends who help me make good decisions
- ☐ my love for my family and the way we communicate
- ☐ something I did recently to help another person my own age
- ☐ how I offered friendship to a new person in school
- ☐ the way I try to remain a person of hope
- ☐ something I did recently to help someone older than me
- ☐ a time when I did the right thing even though it was hard
- ☐ my commitment to do my best in school
- ☐ a moment when I offered comfort to someone who was suffering
- ☐ a time when I offered to pray for someone
- ☐ using the gifts God has given me to help others
- ☐ my ability to forgive someone who has hurt me
- ☐ something I had the courage to stand up for
- ☐ sharing with someone who is in need
- ☐ taking time to read the Sacred Scriptures
- ☐ a way in which I helped my family
- ☐ my faith and trust in God
- ☐ my ability to share joy
- ☐ my appearance and how I care for myself
- ☐ a time when I taught something valuable to a child



God provides us with constant evidence of his love through his Son, Jesus Christ.

(Based on Simon, Howe, and Kirschenbaum, *Values Clarification*, pages 136–138)

# *The light of the world*

Reread Matthew 5:13–16. Write about a time when you hid the light of God under a bushel basket. What happened and why? What keeps you from seeing and sharing God's light with others?



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## Endnotes Cited in Quotations from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

1. Cf. *1 John* 2:20,27.
2. Cf. *John* 16:13.
3. Cf. *John* 20:30.
4. *John* 20:31.
5. Cf. *Mark* 4:33–34.
6. Cf. *Matthew* 13:44–45; 22:1–14.
7. Cf. *Matthew* 21:28–32.
8. Cf. *Mark* 5:25–34; 10:52; etc.
9. *Hebrews* 9:26.
10. Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Collationes in decem praeceptis* I.
11. Cf. *John* 12:49.
12. John Paul II, *Reconciliatio et paenitentia* 16.
13. Cf. *Mark* 16:16.
14. Cf. *Roman Ritual*, Rite of Confirmation (*Ordo confirmationis*), Introduction 1.
15. St. Ambrose, *De myst.* 7, 42: J. P. Migne, ed., *Patrologia Latina* (Paris: 1841–1855) 16, 402–403.