

Confirmation Retreat

Program Requisite: Each Confirmation Program within the Diocese of St. Augustine should include a retreat component. The length and location of this is up to the parish and its circumstances.

Rationale: The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states:

“Preparation for Confirmation should aim at leading the Christian toward a **more intimate union with Christ** and a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit---his actions, his gifts, and his biddings---in order to be more capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities of Christian life.”

(1309)

Building on this premise, the *National Directory for Catechesis* in its discussion on immediate preparation, recommends that parishes should present catechesis for the Sacrament of Confirmation that “is developmentally appropriate and includes retreat experiences.” (p. 123)

Guidelines for Preparing a Confirmation Retreat:

The basis of a retreat experience, regardless of the length of time involved, is to “retire” or move away from day-to-day activities in order to give oneself up to the moving of the Holy Spirit in our lives. If we are to form a “**more intimate union with Christ**,” we should follow his example of retreating from the world from time to time to pray and listen in an atmosphere without distraction.

A Confirmation retreat should be able to lead people of any age toward a greater understanding of the Holy Spirit and how all the Sacraments of Initiation bring them into full participation in the life of the Church.

There should be certain basic elements of a Confirmation retreat no matter what the time or age constraints:

1. **Prayer** is essential to retreat and should be experienced in several ways --- through worship experiences, meditation, journaling, song, etc. A celebration of the Eucharist would be a central aspect.
2. **The Sacrament of Reconciliation** provides a reminder of the limitless mercy of God and our need to be forgiven, to begin again renewed in spirit and love for ourselves and for one another. Youth should have ample time to prepare through an age-appropriate examination of conscience.
3. **Community Building** should permeate the activities of the retreat. Each person should understand that not only is he or she a child of God, but that all are blessed and deserving of our friendship, respect and love. This can be done in small group activities and “managed” free time which gives opportunities for

the retreatants to learn about one another as well as through icebreakers and/or other games.

4. **Witness** is an important element of a retreat. It allows each person to listen to the stories of faith from older youth and/or respected adults. In listening, the retreatants can connect their own faith story with that of the person giving witness as well as with the other people of God as told in Scripture and Tradition.

N.B. Witness talks should be practiced and pre-screened for appropriateness

5. **Catechesis** in the retreat experience should have as its only purpose to prepare retreatants for the Order of Confirmation. The symbols of the ritual and their meaning should be explored as well as what it means to be a Catholic confirmed in the faith. The Gifts of the Spirit that are strengthened within them as they are confirmed should also be explored.

N.B. The retreatants should begin to understand that Confirmation is the beginning of a journey of knowing, loving and serving God and one another.

6. **Parish Community Involvement** is essential as all sacraments are communal in nature. Therefore, the entire parish should participate as much as possible in the retreat, particularly through private and communal prayer. Youth should be known to the parish either by name or by placing their pictures in a visible place in the parish for the intent of asking for prayers.
7. **Forward Looking** is perhaps the most important component of the Confirmation Retreat. Frequently, Confirmation is seen as a destination and not the beginning. The Confirmation retreat should explore future expectations of a life of service to the Church as depicted in Mt 28:19-20.