

Our Lady of Mount Carmel



Shape me, Lord.

***Confirmation Preparation
and Youth Ministry
Program Handbook***

Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish
Ridgewood, New Jersey
201-444-9302
2026-2027 Program Year

YOUTH MINISTRY CONTACT INFORMATION

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Parish Mission Statement

We the people of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish believe in Jesus Christ and embrace his teachings. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, we accept His call to be the Light of the World through Word, Worship, Community Building and Service to all.

Philosophy of the OLMC's Confirmation Program

It is the goal of the Confirmation Preparation Program to nurture, enhance, and deepen the religious education process, which was begun in the elementary years, and bring it to the maturity level of a fully initiated adult Christian.

An emphasis is placed on understanding the past, living the present, and planning for the future as members of the Catholic Church.

The primary objective will be to understand and bring to life, through an experiential learning process, the mission Christ calls each one of us to live out as an Apostle of His love.

Structure of OLMC's Confirmation Program

The Director of Youth Ministry is in charge of the program, which is staffed by trained volunteers. These leaders are provided with educational opportunities on the parish, diocesan, and regional levels in order to ensure the best possible program for our young people.

To ensure the safety of our young people and in compliance with diocesan policy, all adult volunteers involved in OLMC's Youth Ministry Program have been background checked.

All volunteers are supervised, and report directly to the Director of Youth Ministry.

The Four Stages of Confirmation Preparation

The Confirmation Program supports the individual through four stages of development in preparing for, accepting, and committing to full initiation into the church. These stages are as follows:

Stage 1: Invitation

During this stage, a general announcement is made inviting all individuals to consider their journey towards the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Those who are interested will then be asked to fulfill the following steps in order to proceed in the process:

- ▶ Attend the Parent and Candidate Orientation.
- ▶ Come to a personal decision concerning one's commitment to enter the next stage
- ▶ Complete all necessary paperwork, forms, and initial report.

Stage 2: Formation

Once one has accepted the invitation and has completed any objectives set forth in the first stage, the individual is then ready to enter the formation stage of the program. This stage will comprise the next six months (October through March).

During this stage the individuals, now referred to as candidates, will complete most of their educational and service aspects of the program. Candidates will be involved in small group meetings, service projects, individual interviews, retreats, and special events during this time.

The Four Stages of Confirmation Preparation **(cont.)**

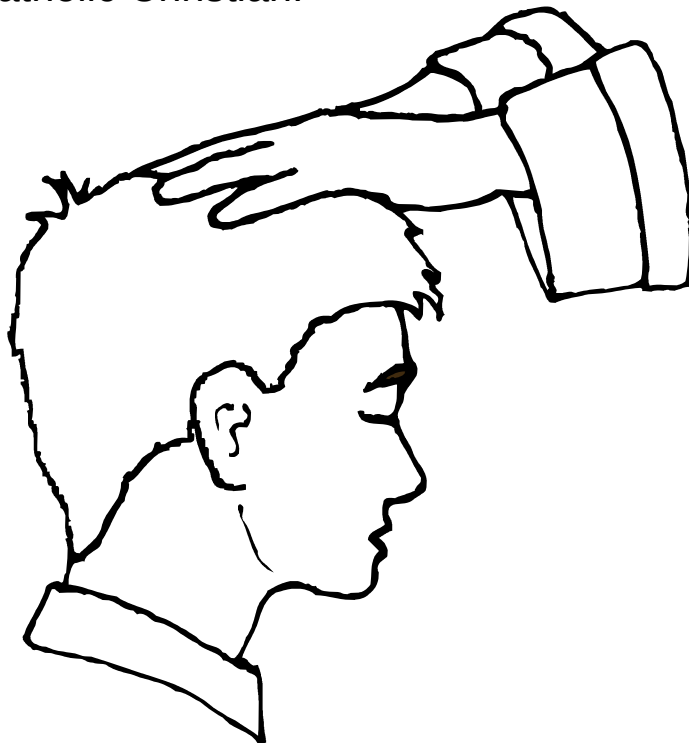
Stage 3: Period of Reflection

This stage is comprised of the last two months before the Confirmation Ceremony.

During this stage, candidates are asked to reflect prayerfully on the commitments and responsibilities of full initiation into the church. It is during this time the candidate should determine for himself or herself if he or she is ready, willing, and able to accept the commitments and responsibilities of full membership.

Stage 4: Mission

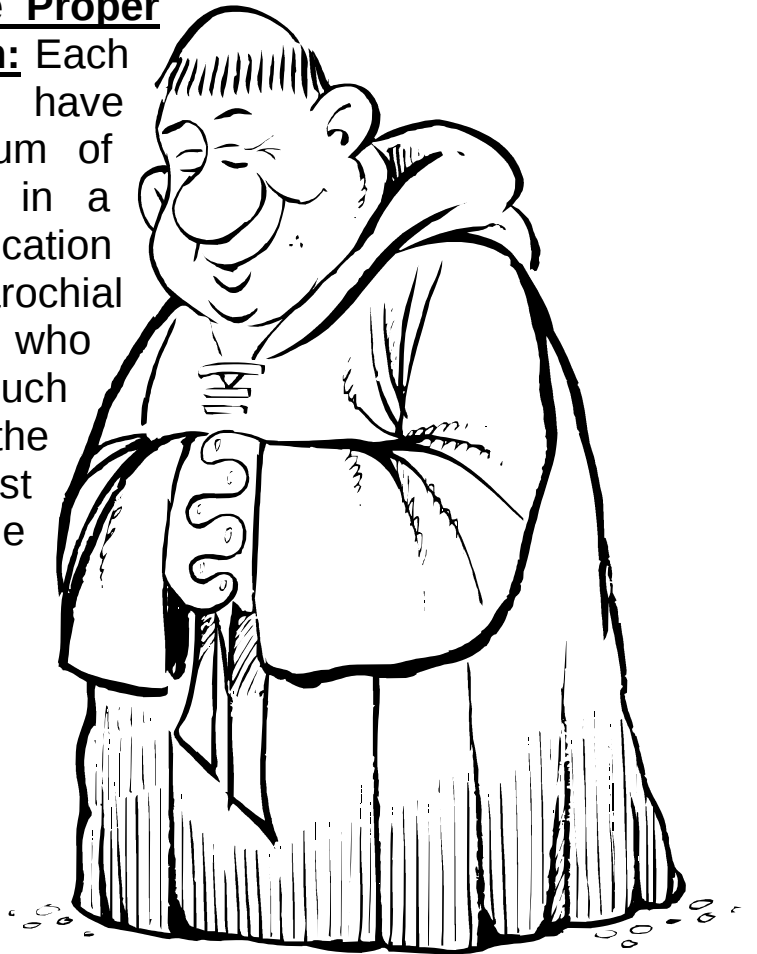
The final stage begins with one's commitment and acceptance of the Sacrament of Confirmation and is unending. It is during this stage that the confirmed individual puts into practice the things learned during the formation stage and begins to actively fulfill the responsibilities of a fully initiated Catholic Christian.



Requirements for Acceptance

In order to be accepted into the Confirmation program, each candidate must meet the following criteria:

1. **Is a Registered Parishioner of O.L.M.C.:** The candidate's family must be registered parishioners in order to enter the program. This may be taken care of at the reception desk of the rectory.
2. **Be of High School Age:** Each candidate must be a minimum of a freshman in high school. An exception is made if a prospective candidate was retained a year in the public or private education system, yet continued ahead in a religious education program.
3. **Has Completed the Proper Religious Education:** Each candidate must have completed a minimum of grades 6, 7, & 8 in a Catholic religious education program or parochial school. Students who have not completed such and wish to enter the program must complete a home study course.



Program Components

In order to provide a well-rounded educational and experiential program for our young people, there are various components, which allow each young person to enhance her or his personal faith life.

SMALL GROUPS: Each candidate is assigned to a small group in which he or she will remain for the next year. It is within the small group that most of the religious instruction will take place. Groups will not exceed twelve candidates.

JOURNEY RETREAT: During the year candidates are asked to attend a Journey Retreat. This experience fosters a sense of community among the young people and brings to light the possibility of establishing a personal friendship with God.

SERVICE PROJECTS: In order to help our young people understand the important role that service to those in need plays in the life of a Christian, each candidate will be asked to participate in acts of Christian Service within their small groups. Small groups are to complete at least one service project during the preparation period.

Program Components (continued)

INTERVIEW: The interview allows time for each candidate to meet individually with the Director of Youth Ministry, or a representative involved in the Confirmation Program. These interviews are designed to encourage each candidate to fully explore their desire to be confirmed. Candidates will partake in one interview during the Reflection Period..

REPORTS: All candidates will be asked to submit a minimum of three, one-page typed reports. These reports are to help the candidates focus on their desire to be confirmed and to share their understanding of the sacrament they wish to receive.

Reports are due as follows:

“My Desire to Join the Program”

Due upon registration.

“My Name and Sponsor”

Due In January.

“My Desire To Be Confirmed”

Due at the time of their interview.

Report Outlines

All reports should be in paragraph form. Please **DO NOT** write answers as if these were individual questions. Instead, answer all five in the context of one paper. You may answer them in any order you desire. Papers should be one page and typed using 12-point text. The papers should be double-spaced.

REPORT #1: My Desire to Join the Program

At the time of your registration, please submit a one-page paper, which answers the following questions:

1. Why do you want to enter the Confirmation process?
 2. What are some things you hope will or will not happen to you during the preparation process of the Sacrament of Confirmation?
 3. What effect do you feel receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation will have on your faith and your life?
 4. If you had to define what Confirmation is, how would you define it? How would you also define The Holy Spirit?
 5. List any SPECIFIC questions you have about the Confirmation Preparation process.
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REPORT #2: My Name and Sponsor

A one-page paper, that answers the following questions should be submitted to the Youth Office during the month of January:

1. What Confirmation name did you choose?
2. Why did you choose that name?
3. What are some important events that occurred in the life of the saint or other important Christian role model whose name you will share?
4. Who did you choose as your sponsor?
5. Why did you choose that individual to be your sponsor?

Report Outlines (cont.)

REPORT #3: My Desire To Be Confirmed

This report should be brought with the candidate to their final interview. This paper should be turned in directly to the individual who is conducting the interview. This paper should **NOT** be sent to the Youth Ministry Office. This one-page paper should answer the following questions:

1. Over the past eight months, you have been making a journey toward your Confirmation day. In what ways have you grown spiritually since you began this program?
2. As you approach Confirmation, what does this sacrament mean to you? What effect do you expect it will have on your life?
3. During the preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation, we talk of God the Holy Spirit. For you, who is the Holy Spirit and how does the Spirit affect your life?
4. What has been the most memorable event within the confirmation program for you? Why was this event so meaningful for you?
5. Now that you have gone through the program, why do you want to receive this sacrament?



Schedule of Meetings

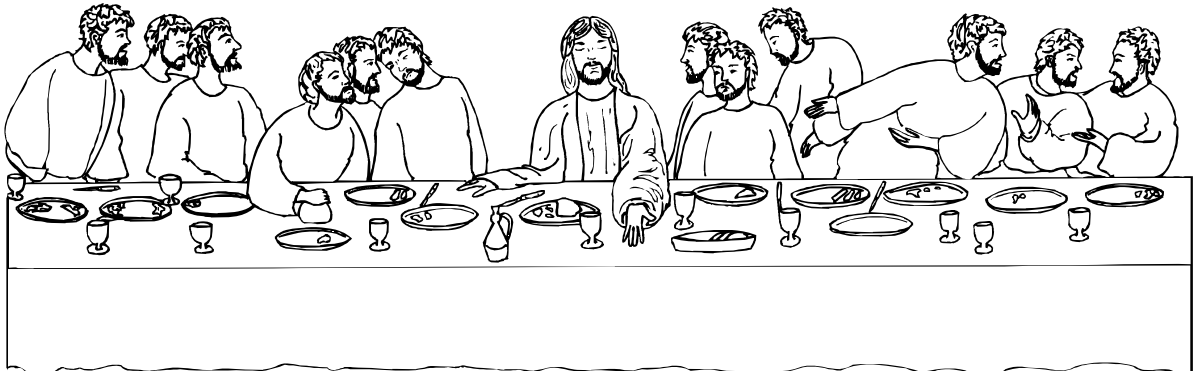
In order to provide flexibility, classes are offered on Sunday mornings and Sunday through Thursday evenings. Small group meetings are never scheduled on Friday or Saturday evenings.

Small groups are usually no larger than twelve candidates. Each small group is taught by two adult leaders who have been background checked in accordance with diocesan policy.

Each small group leader will be responsible for setting their meeting day and the starting time. There are to be a total of eight small group meetings per program year, at a length of one hour and thirty minutes each. This brings the total number of small group instruction hours to 12 per year.

Small group leaders will also determine, with the approval of the Director of Youth Ministry, the number of service projects or “non-instructional” meetings for the group. “Non-instructional” meetings may include Sunday Mass, Advent or Lenten services, the parish retreat or any other major events.

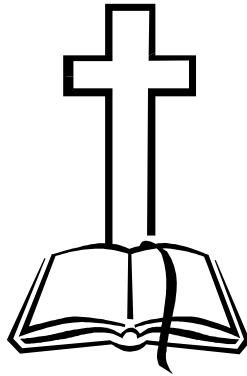
The program will meet once a month starting in October and ending in May.



Confirmation Attendance Policy

1. **ALL** activities that are included in our program are included in this policy. Therefore, attendance will be taken at **ALL** small group meetings, retreats, service projects, and special events.
2. If a candidate is going to be absent, it is the **parent's responsibility** to contact by telephone or email at least one of the small group leaders **AND** the Youth Ministry Office. A reason for the absence must be stated in the message if an answering machine or voicemail system is reached.
3. Candidates are expected to be at all small group sessions and all required events unless illness or a family emergency arises. **Sports events/practices, trips, weekends away, homework, and all other reasons are not acceptable for being absent.**
4. Upon the second absence, the candidate, a parent or guardian, and the Director of Youth Ministry will meet to discuss which course of action is to take place concerning make-up work or continued participation in the program.
5. Any candidate who misses more than two required events within a program year may need to repeat the same program level during the next program year.
6. A make-up class will need to be completed for **EACH** session missed regardless of reason.
7. Some events may not be able to be made up with a make-up assignment.

Parent and Guardian Participation



Parents are encouraged to be actively involved with their child's preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

We ask Parents and Guardians to...

- † Discuss the material presented with their teen on a weekly basis.**
- † Provide transportation for all meetings and activities.**
- † Attend weekly Liturgy with the teen.**
- † Be a faith role model for their teen as well as the rest of the young people in the program.**
- † Attend parent meetings as they arise.**
- † Pray for their own child as well as the entire program.**

In addition to the above, at least one parent or guardian of each candidate will be asked to participate in one form of service to the program.

A list of volunteer needs are located in the registration packet. Please forward any questions to the Director of Youth Ministry.

General Information

Cancellation of Confirmation Small Group Meetings

The authority to cancel a small group meeting due to weather conditions or other unforeseen circumstances belongs to the **SMALL GROUP LEADERS**. All telephone calls concerning this subject should be directed to the small group leaders. If for any reason you cannot reach the leaders, please call the Youth Ministry Office.

If a leader decides to cancel a group meeting for any reason, the following procedure is to be followed:

- 1. The leader calls the Youth Ministry Office to inform us of the cancellation.**
- 2. The leader then contacts each candidate by telephone, leaving messages concerning the cancellation.**
- 3. The leader will reschedule all cancelled meetings and notify candidates of make-up sessions.**

The closing of schools in the morning due to inclement weather does **NOT** automatically cancel small group meetings that evening. Many times the road conditions have improved by the evening hours allowing the meeting to be held. Please check with your group leaders if this situation should arise.

Change in Meeting Place or Time

If for any reason there needs to be a change in the meeting place or time, you will be notified by phone by the small group leader or the Youth Ministry Office.

Behavior Policies

We are very proud of the behavior of the young people who have gone through the program in the past. However, we wish to remind candidates that proper behavior and conduct is expected at O.L.M.C., at any offsite events or activities, at the retreat centers, and Confirmation Small Group service projects.

Any behavior or conduct problems will be addressed directly with the Director of Youth Ministry

Three Strike System: Behavior problems or inattentiveness will be handled based on the following “three strike” system:

1. The leader will speak to the candidate directly as to the problem and what must be done in order to correct the situation. **(STRIKE 1)**
2. If the situation continues, the leader will notify the Director of Youth Ministry who will meet with the candidate, her or his parent or guardian, and the leader (if possible) to discuss what must be done in order to resolve the situation. **(STRIKE 2)**
3. If the situation continues, the leader will notify the Director of Youth Ministry, who in turn will notify the pastor and request that the candidate be removed from the program. **(STRIKE 3)**



Senior High School Code of Conduct

- ✚ I understand that I should not arrive more than ten (10) minutes before the official starting time of the event or activity.
- ✚ I understand that cigarette smoking is unhealthy and, therefore, prohibited at all O.L.M.C. youth events.
- ✚ I understand that I will not be in the possession of, or under the influence of any alcohol or drugs.
- ✚ I understand that I am not to bring any weapons or any other material that might endanger those around me. If I am aware of someone else who is in possession of any dangerous item, I will make an adult aware of the situation.
- ✚ I understand that there is to be no foul language during any O.L.M.C. events.
- ✚ I understand that there is to be no vandalizing of O.L.M.C.'s or other member's property.
- ✚ I agree to respect the other individuals who attend events. This includes my peers, the adult volunteers, and the staff.
- ✚ I agree to participate fully in both small and large group activities.
- ✚ I understand that I am welcome to bring a guest to any activity.
- ✚ I understand that I am responsible for any guests that I bring to a function and I will take the consequences for any Youth Group rules that my guest does not follow.
- ✚ I understand that inappropriate contact of a violent or sexual nature will not be tolerated.

High School Code of Conduct (continued)

- † I understand that I am responsible for the cleanliness of all facilities and will clean up my own mess.
- † I agree not to use photographic devices such as cameras and camera phones without the permission of a youth ministry staff member. This includes trips, activities, retreats, and small group meetings.
- † I understand that O.L.M.C. recycles cans, bottles, paper, and cardboard. I will place all trash in the proper receptacles.
- † I understand that I may be asked to pay for damages to the facility caused by my inappropriate behavior.
- † I understand that I am responsible for reporting any of the above situations caused by others or myself to the adults in charge.
- † I understand that I must arrange a ride to and from all O.L.M.C. activities in advance, and I will not wait until the particular event has ended to find a ride.
- † I understand that I must be picked up promptly at the designated ending times of the events that I attend so that I will not keep the adult's waiting.
- † I understand that once I have my driver's license, I am permitted to drive to O.L.M.C. I agree that I will drive in a responsible and safe manner.
- † I understand that there may be specific rules and regulations based on the individual activity and I agree to abide by those rules. These may be in written form or may be verbalized by the adults in charge.
- † I understand that if I do not follow the Code of Conduct, the consequences may range from a warning, parental notification, suspension from Youth Group functions, community service assignment, or loss of membership without refund. These consequences are based on the discretion of the Youth Minister.

Curriculum Overview

Jesus Christ

Goal: To present to the candidates the teaching of Jesus and to come to an understanding of how His message still reaches out to us today. Areas explored will include:

- ✚ Jesus the Teacher
- ✚ Jesus the Healer

Peace and Justice – To provide an understanding that Christians must be active in their faith, reaching out to those in need. Candidates will come to an understanding that they are now the hands and feet of Jesus on earth.

The Call

- ✚ Investigate Christ's call to perform acts of peace and justice by examining His example in the Gospel.
- ✚ To foster within the candidates an understanding that acts of peace and justice are a necessity to being a Christian.
- ✚ Encourage the candidates to become involved in ongoing service projects as a response to their personal call to service.

Practice and Implementation – To provide an overview and a practical application of living an adult Christian lifestyle.

The Holy Spirit

Goal: To enhance the candidate's knowledge of the Holy Spirit and to explore how the Spirit of God is calling them to service in this world as a Christian. Areas to be explored include:

- ✝ Who is the Holy Spirit and how does the Spirit work in our lives today?
- ✝ The Pentecost experience of the Apostles
- ✝ The Traditional & Charismatic Gifts of the Holy Spirit



Dismissal from Public School
Zorach V. Clauson
343U.S.306 (1956)

This U.S. Supreme Court case ruled that it is not unconstitutional for a public school student to attend religious instruction at a parochial school or church event even if this should disrupt the public school schedule.

By “public school schedule” it has been interpreted to include sporting events, band competitions, school plays, and any other public school sponsored event.

Any type of “punishment” for missing or leaving an event early IS NOT permitted and is in violation of the law. Therefore, school personnel cannot:

- Threaten the student in any way (example: removal from the team)
- Mock or make fun of child’s religious convictions
- Point out the reason why a student is not present or leaving early to other students or staff
- Place a penalty such as “extra laps,” “benching,” or any other type of action, which is placed upon the student because of his or her absence or early dismissal.

If your family ever has a problem with a teacher or coach, please do not hesitate to call the Youth Office.

Candidate/Sponsor Days

Please hold all of the following dates open for events surrounding the celebration of Confirmation. Candidate-Sponsor Day is an opportunity for the candidate and the sponsor to reflect, to pray, and to bond together. We strongly encourage the sponsor to be present for this event, but if the sponsor is not able to attend, a substitute sponsor may stand-in. **No candidate should come to Candidate-Sponsor day without a sponsor or stand-in.**

If the candidate cannot attend the Candidate-Sponsor day that he or she is scheduled for, please contact the Youth Office so that arrangements can be made for the candidate to attend the other session. **All candidates must attend one of the Candidate Sponsor Days.**

You will be notified at a later date as to which Candidate/Sponsor Day you are to attend.

The TENTATIVE dates are as follows:

#1 SATURDAY, April 24th 9AM - 12:30PM

#2 SATURDAY, May 1st 9AM - 12:30PM

Dates are tentative. We may need to change them based on when the Archdiocese informs us when Confirmation will be. We will not have the actual date of Confirmation until mid to late December.

Candidate/Sponsor days will be held in the parish center.

LUNCH WILL NOT BE PROVIDED – PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU HAVE EATEN PRIOR TO ATTENDING. THANK YOU!

CHOOSING A CONFIRMATION NAME

GUIDELINES FOR PICKING A CONFIRMATION NAME & SPONSOR

Below, are the guidelines set by the Archdiocese and the parish for choosing a Confirmation name and Sponsor. Please note that in many cases certain practices are highly recommended, but the candidate may decide not to follow these recommendations. This is perfectly acceptable as long as the alternative guidelines are followed.

THE CONFIRMATION NAME

The Church is basically silent on the issue of name choice at this time. Either a special Confirmation name or the use of one's baptismal name is appropriate. However, the Church does highly recommend that the baptismal name be taken, showing the unity between Baptism and Confirmation.

In the case of a confirmation name, a Christian name is to be selected. This means the name of a Saint or the name of someone the candidate holds in high esteem due to their faith. This person should be of great importance and example to the candidate (in other words - a "living Saint" in the eyes of the candidate).

Names of celebrities or choosing a name simply because one likes it, will NOT be permitted.

When choosing a name, only one name is to be chosen. Example: Choosing "Mary" is appropriate, choosing "Mary Elizabeth" is not.

EXCEPTION TO THE RULE: "John Paul" can be chosen if taking the name of the saint.

CHOOSING A SPONSOR

Each candidate should have their own individual sponsor.

The candidate may choose one of their godparents. This again shows the ties between Baptism and Confirmation. The choice of a godparent is highly recommended.

The candidate may also pick a special sponsor who is not one of the godparents. This special sponsor should be someone the candidate sees as a positive **Catholic** role model in their life.

A biological or adoptive parent of the candidate is NOT permitted to be the sponsor.

PICKING A CONFIRMATION SPONSOR

QUALIFICATIONS OF THE SPONSOR

1. Must be sufficiently mature in his/her faith commitment.
2. Not prohibited by law from exercising the role of sponsor.
3. Must be a minimum age of 18 years. (Exceptions to this rule need approval from the Director of Youth Ministry.)
4. A sponsor can be of either gender.
5. The person chosen must have the intention of performing their role; assume an ongoing spiritual relationship with the candidate and not merely a function as a passive witness to the Sacrament.
6. Sponsor must be a fully initiated Catholic, having received the Sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation.
7. Sponsors are to be active members of a Catholic Church.

THE ROLE OF THE SPONSOR

THE FUNCTION OF THE SPONSOR IS TO:

1. Assist in the preparation for the Sacrament.
2. Accompany the candidate and present him/her to the bishop.
3. Help the candidate fulfill his/her baptismal promises faithfully by growing in a faith relationship with the candidate.

SPONSORS ARE ENCOURAGED TO BECOME INVOLVED WITH THE CANDIDATE BY:

1. Attending the Sponsor/Candidate Enrichment Days.
2. Offering their services in the planning and development of the parish Confirmation program.
3. Deepening their faith relationship with the candidate during the time of preparation for Confirmation.
4. Attending Mass as often as possible with the candidate.
5. Participating in a service project with the candidate if possible.
6. Continuing to be a source of encouragement and guidance for the candidate after receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation.

TRAITS OF A SPONSOR

- A sponsor prays.
- A sponsor participates in the Liturgy.
- A sponsor listens.
- A sponsor is respectful.
- A sponsor serves as a bridge, helping the candidate understand and become familiar with the people, places and traditions of the Catholic faith the candidate is unfamiliar with.
- A sponsor respects the candidate's freedom, allowing the candidate to decide whether this is the right time to seek the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- A sponsor lives in a world of hope, feeling confident in being able to live their faith in the modern world.

A SPONSOR IS...

A Representative of the Catholic Community: The sponsor is the personal representative of the entire Church Community to the individual candidate.

A Companion: A sponsor should serve as a companion or a guide for the candidate along the journey.

The sponsor should be someone who can give you the support when there is hesitation, understanding in times of doubt and comfort when there is inner conflict. This person should also challenge you when your enthusiasm or interest is at a low point. This companion should be someone you can trust, turn to and talk things over with.

A Mentor: A sponsor should be someone who is open to growth in one's faith and putting into practice what that faith requires. This person should be a faith example who you look up to and would like to emulate.

IF THE PERSON CHOSEN IS NOT A MEMBER OF O.L.M.C. PARISH, A LETTER FROM THE SPONSOR'S PARISH STATING S/HE IS A PRACTICING CATHOLIC MUST BE SUBMITTED AND RECEIVED 60 DAYS PRIOR TO CONFIRMATION.

DATES TO REMEMBER:

September 21	Confirmation Orientation Meeting 7:30pm – Church
November 13-15	Confirmation Journey Retreat #1
February 5-7	Confirmation Journey Retreat #2
March 12-14	Confirmation Journey Retreat #3
April 24	Candidate Sponsor Day #1 9am-12:30pm
May 1	Candidate Sponsor Day #2 9am-12:30pm
April 26	Service Project Presentations 7:30pm
May 3	Service Project Presentations 7:30pm

Dates for Confirmation have not yet been confirmed.