



# Confirmation Preparation

*2025-2026 Candidate Handbook*



ST. GERTRUDE  
CHURCH



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# Welcome to Confirmation Preparation

Dear Confirmation Candidates, Parents, and Sponsors,

Welcome to Confirmation Preparation. I'm so glad to have you with us! You probably have a few questions regarding how we prepare at St. Gertrude Parish, so I am offering you this handbook as a resource to help guide you through the year.

## **What is Confirmation Preparation?**

At St. Gertrude Parish, we want to help each Confirmation candidate and his or her family live out their deepest identities as beloved sons and daughters of the Father. We do that through two years of formation, beginning in seventh grade and ending in eighth grade. Candidates have the opportunity to receive the sacrament of Confirmation at the end of their eighth grade year.\*

During those two years of Confirmation Preparation, we foster encounters with Jesus Christ through engaging and faithful teaching, opportunities for prayer, fellowship, and service. We involve parents in many of these elements and expect candidates and their families to spend time growing in an intentional relationship with Jesus Christ and his Church on a daily basis and to participate in the liturgical life (Mass and sacraments) of the parish.

## **What is this handbook about?**

This handbook is meant to help candidates (those preparing for Confirmation), parents, and sponsors easily keep track of what to do, when to do it, and who should be involved. Much of what you will need can be read or printed from the following pages.

If you have any questions about Confirmation Preparation, the contents of this handbook, or anything else, feel free to reach out to me. You are all in my prayers as we head into this new year of formation together!

God bless,

Walter Plummer

Director of Children and Youth Evangelization

wplummer@stgertrude.org

(513) 561-5954, ext. 2122

*\*Seventh and eighth graders enrolled in St. Gertrude School, home school, or another Catholic school are invited to participate in Confirmation Preparation; however, they are not expected to attend all events in order to be confirmed. Please contact Walter Plummer for more information.*

# Candidate Checklist - All Candidates\*

- ☐ **Parent & Candidate Kickoff Meeting**  
Sunday, September 14, 2025  
10:15-11:45 a.m. | St. Gertrude School Cafeteria  
*All candidates and parents should attend. Learn more on page 3.*
- ☐ **John 1:38 Letter**  
Candidates to complete by Sunday, September 28, 2025  
*Learn more on page 5.*
- ☐ **Formation Meetings**  
Sundays, September 14, 2025–April 26, 2026  
10:15-11:45 a.m. | St. Gertrude School Cafeteria  
*Learn more on page 3.*
- ☐ **Retreat**  
Friday–Saturday, November 14–15, 2025  
Woodland Lakes Retreat Center (Amelia, OH)  
*Learn more on page 3.*
- ☐ **Parent & Candidate Sessions**  
Sunday, January 11 & Sunday, April 26, 2026  
10:15-11:45 a.m. | St. Gertrude School Cafeteria  
*Please plan for one parent to attend with each candidate. Learn more on page 5.*
- ☐ **Teaching Mass**  
Tuesday, January 20 or Thursday, January 22, 2026  
6:30-7:30 p.m. | St. Gertrude Church  
*All candidates and parents should attend one session. Learn more on page 4.*
- ☐ **Personal Spiritual Plan Meetings**  
Complete by Sunday, May 17, 2026  
*Learn more on page 6.*

\*“Candidates” refers to all seventh and eighth graders.

# Candidate Checklist - 8th Grade Only

- ☐ **Letter to the Pastor**  
Due Saturday, January 31, 2026  
*To be completed by the candidate. Learn more on page 7.*
- ☐ **Sponsor Form**  
Due Saturday, January 31, 2026  
*To be completed by the sponsor. Learn more on page 8.*
- ☐ **Baptismal Certificate with Sacramental Notations**  
Due Saturday, January 31, 2026  
*This is only for those who have not received Baptism or First Communion at St. Gertrude Parish. Learn more on page 9.*
- ☐ **Candidate & Sponsor Meeting**  
Sunday, February 1, 2026  
11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. | St. Gertrude Parish Gym  
*All eighth grade candidates and their sponsors should attend. Learn more on page 4.*
- ☐ **Confirmation Rehearsal**  
Saturday, May 2, 2026  
6:30-8:30 p.m. | St. Gertrude Church & Parish Center  
*All eighth grade candidates and their sponsors are expected to attend. Learn more on page 4.*
- ☐ **Confirmation Mass**  
Sunday, May 3, 2026  
3 p.m. | St. Gertrude Church  
*All eighth grade candidates and their sponsors should attend. Learn more on page 4.*

# Scheduled Events - All Candidates

## KICKOFF MEETING

**Sunday, September 14, 2025**

**10:15-11:45 a.m. | St. Gertrude School Cafeteria**

All candidates and parents are invited to our opening session to meet other candidates and families, talk about the year ahead, and discuss your questions. Please plan for at least one parent to attend with each candidate.

## CANDIDATE FORMATION MEETINGS

**Sundays, September 14, 2025–April 26, 2026 (See the calendar links below)**

**10:15-11:45 a.m. | St. Gertrude School Cafeteria & Classrooms**

Each Sunday, all seventh and eighth grade candidates gather to ask and discuss some of life's big questions and what Confirmation has to do with them. These sessions typically involve active games, short teachings, small group discussion, and prayer. Each year's content is different than the previous, so eighth graders will receive complementary formation their second year in the program.

*For a complete listing of meeting dates and times, view and subscribe to our digital calendars:*

- [Google/Android OS format](#)
- [iCal format](#)

## CONFIRMATION RETREAT

**7 p.m. Friday, November 14, 2025–5 p.m. Saturday, November 15, 2025**

**Woodland Lakes Retreat Center (Amelia, OH)**

Prior to significant moments in his public ministry, Jesus stepped away to rest and be with his Father. Prior to their Confirmation, all candidates are asked to do the same—through games, personal stories of faith, and times of prayer. This year, we will hold our retreat at Woodland Lakes Christian Camp and Retreat Center in Amelia, OH. We'll send more details about transportation, the schedule, and what to bring closer to the event.

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# Scheduled Events - All Candidates

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## **TEACHING MASS**

**Tuesday, January 20 or Thursday, January 22, 2026**

**6:30-7:30 p.m. | St. Gertrude Church**

The Eucharist is the source and summit of our Christian life, and each Sunday Mass is a brief taste of heaven itself. This is what the Church teaches, yet that seems a far cry from the experience of many Catholics who struggle with boredom, disengagement, and disinterest in the Mass. Where's the disconnect? Why is this happening? In these brief sessions with all candidates and their parents, we want to talk about just that. Our focus this year is on the Opening Rites and the Liturgy of the Word.

## **PARENT & CANDIDATE SESSIONS**

**Sunday, January 11 & April 26, 2026**

**10:15-11:45 a.m. | St. Gertrude School Cafeteria**

Study after study confirms that the greatest influence on a young person's faith life is his or her parents—their practice of faith and the quality of relationship between them and their children. We want to take time during our year to acknowledge that and support parents and candidates with intentional conversations of faith. More details about the content and schedule for these sessions will be sent out closer to the date.

# Scheduled Events - 8th Grade Only

## CANDIDATE & SPONSOR MEETING

Sunday, February 1, 2026

11:30a.m.-1:30 p.m. | St. Gertrude Parish Gym

In the middle of our year of formation, there will be a special event for candidates and sponsors to ask three key questions:

- What will happen at Confirmation?
- Why?
- How can I prepare for that?

*If a sponsor is unable to attend, a parent can attend in his or her place.*

## CONFIRMATION REHEARSAL

Saturday, May 2, 2026

6:30-8:30 p.m. | St. Gertrude Church & Parish Center

Prior to the Confirmation Mass, we will walk through the candidates' and sponsors' roles and actions and what will be different about the Confirmation Mass. We will also set aside time for prayer and the sacrament of Reconciliation to help candidates fruitfully receive their full initiation into the Church. Eighth grade candidates and their sponsors are expected to attend.

## CONFIRMATION MASS

Sunday, May 3, 2026

3 p.m. | St. Gertrude Church

We will celebrate the sacrament of Confirmation at a special Mass for candidates and families. Candidates and sponsors should plan to arrive by 2:30 p.m. A brief reception will follow in the St. Gertrude Parish Center.

### ***Confirmation Mass dress code for candidates and sponsors***

- **Women:** Dresses or skirts should fall to the knee or lower and have a high neckline. Shoulders should be covered. Dress shoes may have a low heel. No athletic shoes or flip flops.
- **Men:** Please wear a jacket with a dress shirt, a tie, dress slacks, and a belt. No polos or T-shirts. Suit/coat/blazer should be in a classic pattern or solid color. Dress shoes, no athletic or open-toed shoes.



# Other Elements - All Candidates

## **JOHN 1:38 LETTER**

**Due September 28, 2025**

The first words Jesus speaks in the Gospel of John are in Chapter 1:38: "What are you looking for?" At the start of this year, we invite you to respond to him. During one of our sessions, we will ask each candidate to write a brief letter that answers the following questions:

- Why are you in Confirmation Preparation this year?
- What do you want most in life? How do you think you can get to that point?
- How does being confirmed relate to what you want most?

## **PERSONAL SPIRITUAL PLAN**

**Due May 17, 2026**

A Personal Spiritual Plan (PSP) is a way for each candidate to (1) intentionally grow in his or her relationship with Jesus and his Church and (2) have meaningful conversations with parents and mentors (sponsors, if possible) about faith in Jesus and what it means to follow him.

### ***Why are we doing PSPs?***

Studies from the past 20 years have confirmed the Church's teaching: honest, healthy, and loving conversations about faith with parents and adult mentors are key to passing on the faith to our young people. Practical experience has taught us that adults gain just as much as adolescents from these conversations. Our PSPs are meant to support candidates, parents, and families in good conversations about life, faith, God, and the Church.

### ***How does a PSP work?***

A PSP consists of four meetings focused on talking with a mentor about prayer and then actually praying together. At the end of each meeting, candidates, parents, and sponsors set personal goals to apply to their daily lives until the next meeting.

### ***What do we do at the PSP meetings?***

Each meeting includes prayer, shared learning, and discussion. See the Personal Spiritual Plan Guide for more details!

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# Other Elements - All Candidates

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## ***Who should be involved in a PSP?***

We ask that at least one parent and the candidate's sponsor or another spiritual mentor participate in the PSP process. Because we want these adult disciples to encourage and model what it means to grow in a relationship with Jesus Christ and his Church, we ask that the parent(s) and sponsor/mentor also each develop and share their own PSP with their candidates.

## ***Do I need to turn in anything?***

Yes! To help keep one another accountable, candidates should complete a meeting log after each of the four meetings. You can view and access this [simple form](#), which will also be available on our website at [stgertrude.org/confirmation](https://stgertrude.org/confirmation). All four logs are due on May 17, 2026.

# Other Elements - 8th Grade Only

## CANDIDATE LETTER TO THE PASTOR

**Due Saturday, January 31, 2026**

Confirmation is often called “the sacrament of Christian maturity” (CCC 1308). In part, this means that all candidates are called to first receive the sacrament with a sincere “yes,” and second be committed to a daily and living relationship with Jesus Christ and his Church. It is important for candidates to clearly say “yes” to the spiritual father of our faith family, our pastor. The purpose of this letter is for the candidate to express the desire to be confirmed, affirm an understanding of what Confirmation means, and to ask our pastor (on behalf of the Church) to accept him or her as a candidate for Confirmation.

### ***How should I write this letter, and what is the content?***

This is a formal letter asking for full initiation into the mystical Body of Christ. That means the letter should:

- be typed or clearly handwritten,
- be addressed to our pastor (Father John Paul Walker, O.P.),
- end with a formal closing (e.g. God bless, Sincerely, Respectfully, etc.),
- include your handwritten signature (leave four spaces for this), and
- include your typed or clearly handwritten name under your signature.

The letter should answer, in your own and honest words, the following questions:

1. What does the Church tell us that Confirmation is? (See CCC 1285-1321 and Acts 2.)
2. Do you want to receive the sacrament of Confirmation? Why or why not?
3. If you desire to receive the sacrament, how will you live out the grace and call of Confirmation in your daily life? (See CCC 1303.)
4. No one can walk the path of faith without guides. Tell us about a saint or beatified person whose life inspires you to draw closer to Christ. What is significant about his or her life? How do you want to emulate this person?
5. At Confirmation, the presider will say “[Name], be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.” That name can be a saint or your baptismal name. What name will you receive at Confirmation? Why have you chosen this name?

### ***Where do I send this letter?***

Please send a scanned photo or copy of your letter to Walter Plummer, director of children and youth evangelization, at [wplummer@stgertrude.org](mailto:wplummer@stgertrude.org) or mail it to/drop it off at the parish office. Envelopes can be addressed to “St. Gertrude Church, ATTN: Walter Plummer, Director of Children and Youth Evangelization.”

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# Other Elements - 8th Grade Only

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## **CONFIRMATION SPONSOR FORM**

**Due Saturday, January 31, 2026**

Please have your sponsor fill out the form on page 12 and return it to Walter Plummer, director of children and youth evangelization. Sponsors may either email the form to [wplummer@stgertrude.org](mailto:wplummer@stgertrude.org) or mail it to/drop it off at the parish office. Envelopes can be addressed to "St. Gertrude Church, ATTN: Walter Plummer, Director of Children and Youth Evangelization."

## **BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATE WITH SACRAMENTAL NOTATIONS**

**Due Saturday, January 31, 2026**

### ***What is a baptismal certificate with sacramental notations?***

When a person is baptized, his or her name is entered into the sacramental register of the parish in which he or she is baptized. Whenever that person receives a sacrament of initiation, the person's original parish of Baptism is notified, and the new sacramental information is entered into the sacramental register. The baptismal parish is then able to send a certificate to any other parish in the world with a record of the sacraments of initiation a person has received.

### ***Who needs to ask for a baptismal certificate with sacramental notations?***

Only those who were not baptized at St. Gertrude Parish need to ask for a baptismal certificate with sacramental notations. If a candidate has been baptized here at St. Gertrude, we will already have those records.

### ***Why are baptismal certificates with sacramental notations needed?***

When a candidate for full initiation asks to be confirmed, the pastor of the parish in which the candidate will be confirmed needs to know that each candidate has indeed been baptized and not previously confirmed. As Catholics, we believe that the sacraments are real and effective instruments of grace, not just symbols. The baptismal certificate with sacramental notations is one way we can make sure that each candidate has been prepared and can validly receive the graces of Confirmation.

Here is a true example of why this matters: There was a young Catholic man in Cincinnati who desired to be married in the Church. He was asked to get a baptismal certificate with

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# Other Elements - 8th Grade Only

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sacramental notations, and there wasn't one! Turns out, he had never been baptized, so he needed to receive Baptism before getting married in the Church. This may not happen to you, but that guy didn't think it would happen to him either!

## ***How do I get a baptismal certificate with sacramental notations?***

Simple. Call or email the parish where you were baptized. Tell them you are seeking to be confirmed at St. Gertrude Parish, and ask for a baptismal certificate with sacramental notations. The parish can mail it straight to us or to you (in which case you would share the copy with us).

## ***What if I have questions?***

If you have any questions about baptisms in a non-Catholic setting, missing records, or sacraments received in another country, call or email Walter Plummer, director of children and youth evangelization, at (513) 561-5954, ext. 2122, or [wplummer@stgertrude.org](mailto:wplummer@stgertrude.org) to get things started.

# CONFIRMATION SPONSOR FORM

**Sponsors**, please fill out this form and return it to Walter Plummer, director of children and youth evangelization, at [wplummer@stgertrude.org](mailto:wplummer@stgertrude.org) or mail it to/drop it off at the parish office. Envelopes can be addressed to "St. Gertrude Church, ATTN: Walter Plummer, Director of Children and Youth Evangelization."

Sponsor's Name (First, Middle, Last) \_\_\_\_\_

Candidate's Name (First, Last) \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsor's City and State of Residence \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsor's Email \_\_\_\_\_

In accepting the responsibility of sponsoring this candidate and initialing each line, I affirm that:

- I am not a parent of this candidate. \_\_\_\_\_
- I have received the sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation). \_\_\_\_\_
- I am at least 16 years of age. \_\_\_\_\_
- I participate weekly in Sunday or Saturday Vigil Mass and give witness to my faith in Christ Jesus by receiving Holy Communion. \_\_\_\_\_
- If married, I was married in the Catholic Church and according to the laws of the Church. \_\_\_\_\_
- I believe all that the Catholic Church professes and teaches, and I truly make an effort to incorporate these teachings into my daily life. \_\_\_\_\_
- I am aware that I am assuming responsibility to be a role model and mentor—by my life of prayer and Christian example—for the person I am sponsoring. \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsor's Home Parish \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsor's Home Parish Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_ (Arch)Diocese \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a registered parishioner at St. Gertrude Parish? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

Name of Pastor at Sponsor's Home Parish \_\_\_\_\_

*"Pastors must ascertain the spiritual qualifications of sponsors. The sponsor for any candidate may be male or female and is to be sufficiently mature, a practicing Catholic, who has himself/herself been confirmed and has not been prohibited by law from exercising the role of sponsor. One of the Baptismal sponsors is not only allowed, but is in fact desired as the Confirmation sponsor, so as to emphasize the relationship between Baptism and Confirmation" (Canon 893). This person is an active witness of the Catholic faith in both word and deed and is able to perform the duties of a Confirmation sponsor.*

Pastor's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

(Affix Church Seal)

# Frequently Asked Questions

## **Why are there expectations for candidates outside of the formation events?**

St. Augustine wrote, "The God who created you without you will not save you without you" (St Augustine, Sermon 169, 13 [PL 38,923]). In Confirmation, we are offered a great gift. The question for all of us, including Confirmation candidates is, are we willing to receive the grace God offers? Our individual preparation elements are meant to help young people discern their willingness to be confirmed, enlist the help of spiritual mentors, and deepen their daily relationship with the Lord. While our events are meant to help support that readiness, each candidate should spend time outside of our monthly offerings preparing for and assenting to this gift.

## **What if I can't come to some events?**

We understand that schedule conflicts and illness will prevent perfect attendance. There will be materials and resources for candidates and parents/sponsors to review and complete at home for any missed meetings.

## **Do I have to choose a Confirmation name?**

In the Rite of Confirmation, the bishop will say, "[Name], be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit." Each candidate will choose a name for the bishop to say, which will be entered into the parish's sacramental register. The name can either be the candidate's baptismal name or the name of a saint or beatified person from the history of the Church. Whatever name you choose, it should be a sign of your identity as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

## **What if my sponsor can't attend something?**

If a sponsor cannot attend the candidate and sponsor meeting, Confirmation rehearsal, or Confirmation Mass, you can still be confirmed! A parent can stand in for meetings, and a "proxy" can stand in for Mass. This proxy must be over 16 years old and a confirmed and practicing Catholic. A parent may serve as a proxy for Confirmation. Please let us know if you will have a proxy, as his or her name will be entered into the sacramental register, along with the candidate's and sponsor's names.

## **What if I can't come to the Confirmation Mass?**

If you cannot attend the Confirmation Mass, there are two possible alternatives: wait to be confirmed until next year, or work with us to find a Confirmation Mass at a local parish that you could attend. Let us know as early as possible, as many parishes have Confirmation earlier in the year than St. Gertrude Parish.

*If you have other questions, please contact Walter Plummer at [wplummer@stgertrude.org](mailto:wplummer@stgertrude.org) or (513) 561-5954, ext. 2122.*