

Liturgy Preparation Sheet

For the Service of Light *outside* Sunday Mass for Confirmation Candidates from _____ School

This preparation sheet can be used to plan for the Service of Light outside Sunday Mass, for example at an evening ceremony which families can attend. It is envisaged that this planning sheet be completed at a meeting attended by representatives of the home, school and parish communities.

An opportunity to take a pledge abstaining from alcohol and illegal drugs is offered as part of this liturgy. In recent years, it has been deemed an appropriate setting in which to do so. The pledge can, however, also be taken as part of the Confirmation ceremony, graduation ceremony or on another occasion such as Temperance Sunday.

As the children have promised to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation in preparation for Confirmation, an opportunity to do so may be offered at the end of this liturgy. It may be included where it is deemed appropriate, and where sufficient priests are available. Parents and other family members may also be offered the opportunity to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

PRELIMINARY NOTES

Date: _____

Time: _____

Celebrant(s): _____

If an opportunity to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation is to be offered, it may be necessary to invite a number of additional priests to assist.

Music

The Service of Light will be greatly enhanced by the presence of musicians and/or choirs, whether from the parish or the school. Some suggestions for hymns are given below, but these are by no means exhaustive. Please feel free to use suitable alternatives, making sure that the whole congregation is provided with the words to sing.

Lighting of Candles

- Before the liturgy begins, place the paschal candle prominently in the sanctuary area.
- Candidates should be asked to bring their baptismal candle to the Service of Light. It is always helpful to have some spare candles ready for those who may have forgotten theirs.
- Where there is a large number of candidates, representatives from the parish community will be required to help share the light from

the paschal candle with the parents. It may be especially appropriate to invite young people from the community to do this. They may also help to collect the Confirmation pledges.

Pledge Ceremony

Traditionally, candidates for Confirmation have been given the opportunity to promise to abstain from alcohol and illegal drugs as part of their preparation for the sacrament. This is linked with the fact that they are to be given the fullness of the Holy Spirit, and strengthened to make good decisions. Candidates may choose to abstain from alcohol until an age of their choosing, or until they are eighteen, or for life. This decision should be made in consultation with their parents/guardians. Part of the pledge also includes a promise to abstain from harmful drugs for life, and to help others to do the same. Children should be given the opportunity to discuss the pledge in

depth as part of SPHE, and it should be sent home well in advance for consultation with parents/guardians. Both children and parent/guardian sign the pledge. Young people may also be offered the opportunity to become members of the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association either on a temporary basis or for life.

Where candidates for Confirmation will be given the opportunity to take a pledge to abstain from alcohol and illegal drugs as part of this ceremony, they should be invited to bring their pledge with them. It should be placed in an A4 envelope with the candidate's name on the front, as this will be returned to them. A sample template is provided, or certificates can be purchased.

Preparing the church building

Many teachers like to work with the parish community to decorate the church, both to make it welcoming and friendly for children and families, and to honour the special occasion that is being

celebrated. There are a few points to bear in mind where this is the case:

- Flowers serve to honour our encounter with God. It is appropriate to place flowers around the sanctuary area but not on the altar itself. Flowers can also be placed in the entrance hall/porch to express welcome and festivity. It is important that flowers, candles or other objects do not distract from the area around the tabernacle during the Mass. The consecrated hosts in the tabernacle are referred to as the 'Reserved Sacrament' because these hosts are reserved to be used for visits to the sick and for adoration and prayer outside of Mass times. The sanctuary lamp reminds us of the presence of the Reserved Sacrament in the tabernacle and that we are in a very sacred space.
- There is no requirement for the children to prepare artwork for the church. In some cases, this can distract from the ceremony itself. It may be appropriate, however, to display the children's artwork in the entrance hall/porch of the church.

INTRODUCTORY RITES

Entrance Hymn/Song

Suggestion from *Grow in Love*:

- *Christ Be Our Light*, composed by Bernadette Farrell (Fourth Class/P6 Teacher's Manual, p.404)

Sign of the Cross and Greeting

Words of Welcome

- A parish representative might welcome the candidates for Confirmation and their families to the liturgy. This person can remind those gathered that the children were first welcomed to the church in the Sacrament of Baptism. Tonight is their first step in confirming for themselves the promises made on their behalf in Baptism. These words of welcome could also be an opportunity to tell the young people that they have been included in the prayers of the community of faith over the past few months.

Penitential Act

Gloria

(Omit during Lent and Advent)

Collect

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Suggestions for readings based on the theme of light are given below. When the Service of Light takes place outside Sunday Mass, some or all of the readings may be taken from the Mass of the day or the Mass of Christian Initiation (Lectionary III, p. 18 and following). Except for those with hearing impairment, the congregation does not need a copy of the words of the readings.

The readings should be proclaimed from the Lectionary. Typically a 'Reader/Lector' proclaims the Word of God at Mass. This person has been trained and commissioned for this work in the church. The Word of God is not merely 'read' at Mass, it is proclaimed. For this reason, the most appropriate person to do this work is a trained Minister of the Word.

First Reading (Old Testament)

Suggestion: Isaiah 9:2-7

Proclaimed by: _____

Responsorial Psalm

The psalm should be sung. It is led by the psalmist, a cantor or the choir. The congregation and all the ministers should be facilitated to take up their part and sing the response each time.

Suggestion from *Grow in Love*:

The Lord, He Is My Shepherd (Psalm 23), composed by Bernard Sexton (Second Class/P4 Teacher's Manual, p. 139)

Led by: _____

Gospel Acclamation

The Gospel acclamation should be sung. The congregation and all the ministers repeat the acclamation after the cantor or choir. The cantor or the choir alone sings the verse.

The congregation and all the ministers repeat the acclamation after the verse has been sung.

Verse sung by: _____

Gospel

Suggestion: Matthew 5:1-15

Proclaimed by: _____ (priest/deacon)

Homily

The Handing over of Baptismal Candles

Where there are a small number of candidates for Confirmation, it may be appropriate to have them and their parent(s)/guardian(s) stand around the sanctuary area for this part of the liturgy. Otherwise, the candidates and their parents/guardians should be invited to stand when called upon.

Priest/deacon: Parents and guardians, it might not seem like eleven or twelve years ago since you brought your child to the church to be baptised. On that day, you chose a life of faith for them, and you lit a baptismal candle to symbolise that life of faith. It would be a light that would guide them, especially in times of darkness, worry or trouble. We invite you now once again to light your child's baptismal candle.

Parish representatives may help to share the light from the paschal candle with the parents/guardians, as necessary.

Priest/deacon: Parents and guardians, please face your children and repeat after me:

I give you this candle *(repeat)*

As a sign of your faith. *(repeat)*

I lit it for you *(repeat)*

When your hands were smaller. *(repeat)*

I offer it to you now *(repeat)*

Because you are able to hold it for yourself. *(repeat)*

Keep it. *(repeat)*

Treasure it. *(repeat)*

Share it. *(repeat)*

Parents hand the candles to their children.

Priest/deacon: Candidates for Confirmation, in receiving this candle, you are taking the first step in confirming the promises made on your behalf in baptism. Remember what your parents have said: Keep your faith. Treasure it. Share it. You are the light of the world. As we look forward to Confirmation day, we pray God's blessing on you as we say:

Father, send your Holy Spirit to these your children to be their helper and guide.

Give them the Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding, the Spirit of Right

Judgement and Courage, the Spirit of Knowledge and Reverence.

Fill them with the Spirit of Wonder and Awe in your presence.

All: Amen.

Children extinguish candles, everyone returns to their seats.

Prayer of the Faithful

The intentions for the Prayer of the Faithful are given by the deacon. In the absence of a deacon, the intentions are presented by another representative of the community that has gathered. Ideally, however, only one person gives these intentions, so that the focus of the whole gathering is on the prayer, and not on the person who is giving it. If one of the candidates for Confirmation gives an intention, it would be meaningful to have the text composed by the children themselves, with help.

Introduction by the priest

Sample Intentions

1. We pray for parents and godparents;
(pause to pray)
that they may continue to support us in our faith journey,
and to be our first and best teachers.
Lord, hear us.
2. We pray for our teacher(s) _____ and our priest(s);
(pause to pray)
that the Holy Spirit will continue to inspire them.
Lord, hear us.
3. We pray for each person *(or, 'each one of us')* preparing to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation;
(pause to pray)
that they *(or, 'we')* listen and respond to the Holy Spirit
and so live as true followers of Jesus.
Lord, hear us.
4. We pray for those who are treated unfairly;
(pause to pray)
that we may do what we can to help and support them.
Lord, hear us.
5. We pray for those who are sick or sad;
(pause to pray)
that they will feel loved and supported in their time of difficulty.
Lord, hear us.
6. We pray for those who have died;
(pause to pray)
that they may be at peace at home with God in heaven.
Lord, hear us.

Conclusion by the priest, and invitation for all gathered to pray the Our Father.

PLEDGE CEREMONY (OPTIONAL)

Invite candidates for Confirmation to stand.

Priest/deacon: Together with your parents, you may have decided to make a promise to abstain from alcohol and illegal drugs. We will now collect those pledges.

Pass a basket large enough to collect all of the A4 envelopes, or ask the parish representatives who helped to light the children's baptismal candles to help collect the pledges.

Priest/deacon: We ask God's blessing on these promises and on you who have made them. We pray that, strengthened by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, you will be able to remain faithful to the pledge that you have made. As your teachers, priests and family members, we promise to help and support you in whatever way we can to always stay away from anything that will harm you, your mind or your body.

Holy Spirit,
Inspired by the gifts of Courage and Right Judgement,
May these young people honour the promises they now make.
Strengthen them, embolden them, and encourage them.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

CONCLUDING RITE

Final Blessing and Dismissal

Concluding Hymn/Song

Where this is to be the final hymn/song (with no Penitential Service to follow) – suggestion from *Grow in Love*:

- *This Little Light of Mine* – Traditional American (First Class/P2 Teacher's Manual, p.290)

OPTIONAL CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

Candidates can be reminded that they promised to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation in preparation for Confirmation. Parents/guardians can also be invited to celebrate the sacrament and so provide further example and witness to their children.

The following is a sample examination of conscience that can be read by a parent or parish representative.

Every day of our lives we make choices. Sometimes we make the right choices. At other times we make wrong choices and do things that we later regret. Let's take a moment now to reflect on our lives, and on the choices we have made. We know that when we realise our mistakes and have a change of heart, God always forgives us and encourages us to try again.

If you are comfortable in doing so, you may like to close your eyes. *(Pause)*

Take a deep breath in ... and out ... *(Pause)*

Jesus told us that, as his followers, we should love God, and love our neighbour as we love ourselves. Let's reflect on these three things for a moment.

Think about your relationship with God ...
Do you make time for God in your busy life? *(Pause)*
Do you talk to God by praying? *(Pause)*

Now, think about your relationships with others ...
Do you show love and respect to your family members? *(Pause)*
Do you share generously what you have with others? *(Pause)*
Do you try your best to include people who have been left out or who are ignored by others? *(Pause)*

Think about how you treat yourself ...
Do you let fear stand in the way of doing the right thing? *(Pause)*
Do you take care of your health by eating well, exercising and getting enough rest? *(Pause)*
Do you try your best in everything you do? *(Pause)*

Heavenly Father,
we know that you are always ready to forgive us.
Help us now to recognise those times when we made the wrong choice and didn't follow your way of love.
Give us the strength to live a better life, following the example of your Son, Jesus, and with the help of the Holy Spirit.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
All: Amen.