

SERVICE OF LIGHT (OUTSIDE OF MASS)

During the Service of Light, the parents/guardians hand the Confirmation candidate their lighted baptismal candle, acknowledging that this young person is ready now to accept responsibility for his/her own faith, with continued support from their families and the faith community to which they belong.

PREPARATORY 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/guardians. 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

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 in an envelope with their name on the front. This envelope will be returned to them. A sample template is provided in these resources, or certificates may 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 young people and families, and to honour the special occasion that is being celebrated. There are a few points to bear in mind:

- 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 not necessary for the young people to prepare artwork for the inside of the church. In some cases, this can distract from the ceremony itself. It may be appropriate, however, to display the young people's artwork in the entrance hall/porch of the church.

INTRODUCTORY RITES

Entrance Hymn/Song

- See music suggestions from the *Grow in Love* programme in these resources.

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. Today 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

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Suggestions for readings based on the theme of light are given below. The readings should be proclaimed from the Lectionary. The most appropriate person to do this work is a trained Minister of the Word.

First Reading (Old Testament)

Suggestion: Isaiah 9:2-7

Text: _____

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 responses.

- See music suggestions from the *Grow in Love* programme in these resources.

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

Text: _____

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/guardians 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 or guardians 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 usually offered by the deacon or, in the absence of a deacon, by another representative of the community. On this occasion, however, one or more of the candidates for Confirmation could be selected to offer the Prayer of the Faithful. Where this is the case, it would be meaningful to have the text composed by the young people themselves, with assistance as required.

Introduction by the priest

Sample Intentions

1. We pray for our parents/guardians 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 unfairly treated in our world;
(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

Our Father

Introduction by the priest

All: *Our Father*

PLEDGE CEREMONY (OPTIONAL)

Invite candidates for Confirmation to stand.

Priest/deacon: Together with your parents/guardians, 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 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 RITES

Final Blessing and Dismissal

Concluding Hymn/Song

- See music suggestions from the *Grow in Love* programme in these resources.

OPTIONAL CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

Candidates can be given the option to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation in preparation for Confirmation. Parents/guardians may 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/guardian 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.