

Saint Francis of Assisi Catholic Community

St. John the Baptist & St. Lawrence Churches

High School Ministry Description & Confirmation Preparation 2015-CURRENT

It is no secret that teens today face daily struggles previous generations largely did not. Technology, teen suicide, social isolation, eating disorders, and more have led to a legitimate identity crisis for many teens. A constant search for an identity leads to extreme anxiety for many, all the while parents tirelessly try to show their children the greatness they already possess as children of God. Confirmation, and really, faith in general, is easy to place among a myriad of other pursuits that constantly vie for our attention, each promising fulfillment, joy, and peace. Ironically, the fulfillment, joy, and peace we each seek can be found only in Jesus Christ, Crucified and risen from the dead.

We are all searching for something, but only some come to realize that we are actually searching for Some-One. At our Baptism, He claimed us as His sons and daughters, and called us by name to know Him, love Him, and serve Him in this life, in order to be happy with Him forever in the next. At Confirmation, He again gives us His Holy Spirit to strengthen and guide us along the narrow path to true peace and happiness. Given all the fleeting things our culture tells us will satisfy our deepest longings, our teens must hear anew the words of Jesus Christ: "I came that you might have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10)

These realities, along with prayer, discussion, and consultation with other parishes in our diocese and around the country, have led St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Community to adopt the following revisions to our High School Ministry program, effective Fall 2015:

Revision 1 (FALL 2015): Begin shifting Confirmation to be celebrated in 9th grade

This past fall, 9th -11th grade teens (grades apply to the 2015-16 school year) prepared to be confirmed together in Spring 2016. Following that group, students as early as 9th grade may begin preparation each year to be confirmed in the spring, given they have been in the program at least one year prior or an 8th grade graduate of SJB. All high school teens should plan to fully participate in the program outlined in preparation for receiving the Sacrament.

Revision 2 (2016 and beyond): Integrate Confirmation preparation into a 4-year High School Ministry

Faith and parish life is something meant for a lifetime, not just until teens are confirmed. Along with that, teens play an important role in a parish, and we want them to live that role to the full! We know how hard it is to commit to preparing for Confirmation *and* try to be involved in the parish. So, beginning in 2016, all high school teens in our parish (9th-12th grade) will be able to participate in a new High School Ministry/Discipleship Groups. This ministry will be small group based, ideally placing teens of the same age and gender in a community led by 1-2 adult mentors. Together, these groups will seek to deepen each other's relationship with Jesus Christ and His Church, as well as meet the deepest desires of

teens today. These groups will serve as the foundation for 4 years of bonding, fellowship, and community for our teens.

At this point, you may be asking yourself, “What does this all mean?”

This is a huge shift in thinking! Confirmation will be a step in the journey our teens make when they are ready, not a finish line to work towards. During their high school years, they will have the opportunity to be challenged to live life abundantly, and be shown, not told, how to do it. At the proper time, they will receive the Gifts of the Holy Spirit to strengthen them on this journey. The intent of these revisions is to establish teens early in high school with a support group grounded in faith that continues throughout high school. The same support teens (and parents) experience in preparing for Confirmation will now continue throughout high school. Here’s how both parts will work together:

High School Ministry

Consistency is the goal for this ministry – consistently providing a framework for teens to have their deepest needs met through authentic friendship and mentoring. High School Ministry will continue to meet from September through April throughout a young person’s high school career. Most weeks will see small groups of same-age teens growing together in prayer and discipleship. Small groups will come together on occasion for large group gatherings and mission work.

As you can imagine, a basketball team would not function very well if players don’t show up for practice. It would show on the court in games. Unless every member is fully committed to the goal, the team will certainly struggle, and possibly fail in its mission. Just so, these small groups have a mission to grow in holiness and virtue; uncommitted members will make the group less than life-changing. That’s why we ask our teens to fully participate and COMMIT to high school ministry.

Confirmation

In addition to attending monthly small groups from October-February, preparation will include 4 sessions on Wednesday evenings. These sessions will be 90 minutes long (3 with a parent and 1 session with their sponsor). **Because of your great and important role in guiding your teen in the faith, at least one parent will be required to attend each of these sessions with their teen.** Teens will also have a short interview with Tiffany and the high school core team at the end of preparation to help them discern their readiness for Confirmation. From March to April, teens will meet one-on-one with their sponsor either in person or via phone/Skpe or FaceTime.

The Church teaches us that part of preparation for Confirmation “should strive to awaken a sense of belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ, the universal Church as well as the parish community” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1309). To help achieve this goal, each teen should choose a parish ministry in which to be involved during his/her preparation. This can be singing in the choir, serving Mass, helping the younger grade religious education program, decorating the church, helping with funeral lunches, and anything in between. The idea is to serve the parish and understand how our individual gifts can be directed

towards the good of our parish family. This involvement should be something that happens once/month, and teens are welcome to change things up month-to-month.

Lastly, at some point during the preparation process, each teen will be asked to present a recent Baptism certificate (obtained from the church where the baptism was celebrated), select a sponsor, and select a Saint name (optional). Please see the Candidate Handbook for more information.

Conclusion

Our faith teaches us that we were each created by God to love and to be loved. So often in life, we can feel alone, isolated, hopeless, and worthless. We see family members go through these emotions, and our hearts break. A life lived with and for Jesus, although demanding, assures us of constant companionship, fulfillment, dignity, and unassailable hope. Speaking to young people about this reality, Pope Benedict XVI said,

“The World offers you comfort, but you were not made for comfort. You were made for Greatness.”