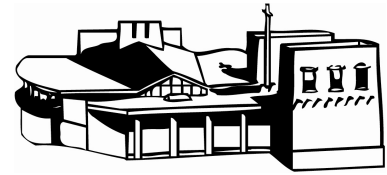


# St. Agnes Confirmation Preparation Packet

This class is for teens in their 2<sup>nd</sup> consecutive year of Faith Formation that have already received Baptism, 1<sup>st</sup> Reconciliation and 1<sup>st</sup> Communion and are now ready to make the next level of commitment of preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation.



Attendance is imperative. No more than 1 absence from sacrament prep classes is allowed. Parent meetings, retreats, and rehearsals are just as important. Students must also attend at least 15 Youth Group sessions (optional for Catholic School students). We hope that this experience enriches your teen, your family, and sponsor.

## Parent's Checklist for Confirmation

- Sign-in at today's meeting. Pick up the following:
  - Sacramental Preparation Packet containing the required forms and schedules for the year.
  - Diocesan Required Knowledge for Confirmation packet.
  - Parent Commitment for Sacrament Preparation of their Child form (sign and return tonight).
  - St. Agnes Church 50-50 Partnership for Sacramental Preparation form.
- Please have the following items on file in the Faith Formation Office by the next meeting (October 14, 2009):
  - Family registration as members of St. Agnes parish.
  - A copy of your child's Baptismal certificate.
  - A copy of your child's 1<sup>st</sup> Holy Communion certificate.
  - If your student did not attend Youth Group at St. Agnes last year, a letter (or report card) from the church/school your child attended religious education last year (2008-2009 school year).
  - Pay fees. There is a sacramental fee of \$75 payable to St. Agnes Parish.
- Please turn in the following items by Ash Wednesday, February 25, 2009:
  - Confirmation Certificate Information form.
  - Student Essay (My Confirmation Name, Sharing the Story of My Saint)
  - Sponsor Eligibility form.

*Confirmation ceremony is not yet set by the Bishop's office. We expect it to be in April after Easter.*

*Mandatory Rehearsal will be 6-8pm on the Wednesday prior to the ceremony.*

# What difference does Confirmation make?

*by Joseph Martos*

It's been a long time, but I can remember it well. The 40 of us were lined up in the schoolyard on a cold day, our red "graduation" robes blowing in the wind. We were only in the fifth grade, but we were allowed to wear the robes for Confirmation—red being the color the Church uses to represent the Holy Spirit. We felt very grown-up, and very proud.

An hour later, as far as I could tell, it was over. We had been anointed (blessed with oil) on the forehead and slapped lightly on the cheek. In those days, that "slap" told us that we had to be "soldiers of Christ," ready to suffer for our faith. We had sung "Come, Holy Ghost," and the bishop had prayed over us and put his hand on our head. I felt like I had been ordained or surely something as important and official as that.

I look back on that day of years ago and ask myself, what difference did it make? It was a nice ceremony—almost like a parade or a welcome-home celebration. And of course there was the party afterwards and the Confirmation presents. But really, I didn't understand how much of a welcome it was and to what!

My wife tells me that, for her, the sacrament did make a big difference right away. I was glad to hear that on her Confirmation day she felt the love and power of God in a special way. She began to pray more, and attended Mass on weekdays. She made a constant effort to be more helpful at home, to be more polite to her parents, and to be less quarrelsome with her sisters—and she felt the grace within her to succeed.

## Connecting the present to the past

To help me know why we do what we do now in the Church, I like to recall our Church history and tradition. In the early days of the Church, many Christians felt the Holy Spirit come into their life through the "laying-on of hands," as it was called then. A leader of the Christian community would lay his hands on those who had been baptized and pray for the Holy Spirit to come down into them. This practice seems to have been a forerunner of the official sacrament which we now call Confirmation. Afterwards, these new Christians would spontaneously be inspired to praise God aloud and pray in languages they hadn't known before.

Today, some Christians called charismatics or Pentecostals (including Catholics) testify that they have had this same experience—being "baptized in the Spirit," as they call it. It is not the same as the Sacrament of Confirmation, but it is a practice which seems to make them more receptive to the presence of the Holy Spirit. They feel changed inside, and charged with a spiritual energy that they never had before.

The way that Confirmation is celebrated in the Church today is a reminder of that early Christian practice, although the bishop no longer lays his hands directly on the heads of those who are being confirmed. During the ceremony, the bishop extends his hands over the candidates and prays: "All-powerful God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, by water and the Holy Spirit you freed your sons and daughters from sin and gave them new life. Send your Holy Spirit upon them to be their helper and guide. Give them the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of right judgment and courage, the spirit of knowledge and reverence. Fill them with the spirit of wonder and awe in your presence."

Earlier in the ceremony, to prepare them for this moment, the bishop asked the candidates to renew the promises which their parents made for them at Baptism. He went over each of the major points of the Creed we say every Sunday at Mass and asked the candidates whether they believe in the Fatherhood of God, the Lordship of Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit, and other teachings of the Church.

When the candidates respond to these statements of faith, they do so in a group, as part of the Confirmation ceremony. They all give the same outward response, but inwardly their responses can differ in emotional intensity. Some may reaffirm their faith with all their heart, and they may open themselves up to a deeper and more mature awareness of the Holy Spirit's presence in their life. Others may feel absolutely no change of heart as they go through the Confirmation ceremony. Most people's experience probably falls somewhere in between these two extremes.

Different experiences of Confirmation are matched by different responses to the sacrament and its graces. In talking about my wife, I said that she not only felt something different at her Confirmation, but she also behaved differently afterwards. On the other hand, I don't remember behaving any differently right after I was confirmed, although I can honestly say that if I weren't a confirmed Christian I might have lived my life very differently over the years. And I'm sure that there are people whose Confirmation has never, ever made any difference whatsoever in their life. But there again, most people fall somewhere between the two extremes.

## It used to be different

With these widely differing responses to Confirmation, why do we have it at all? *What* can we expect? *Where* did it come from?

In the earliest days of Christianity (we learn about them from the New Testament, especially from the Epistles of St. Paul and the Acts of the Apostles), adults became members of the Church through both a water baptism and a laying-on of hands. For many converts, becoming a Christian meant giving up sinful habits and beginning a new life. They felt a great spiritual energy to live differently from the majority of people around them.

Centuries after the apostles, when almost everyone in the Roman Empire was Christian, most people no longer experienced such dramatic change in their life at Confirmation. In the fourth century, for example, St. Augustine wrote, "Who in the present day expects that those on whom hands are laid for the bestowal [gift] of the Spirit will suddenly begin speaking in tongues?" In other words, only a few hundred years away from the apostles, those charismatic gifts I mentioned earlier had all but disappeared. Becoming a Christian by that time meant living like everybody else and seldom suffering or even feeling uncomfortable.

As years passed, the laying-on of hands by the bishop was changed to an anointing with oil, since in the Scriptures anointing is often associated with the reception of God's Spirit. And, some years after that, the full ceremony of Christian initiation into the Church was divided into two parts: baptism with water by a priest, and anointing with oil by a bishop. This happened because the bishop could not always be present at everyone's baptism, and yet he wanted to personally receive every new Christian into full membership in the Church. After a while, this second part of Christian initiation became a completely separate ritual called Confirmation.

Eventually it turned out that, while all Christians were baptized, few were confirmed. One reason for this was that every parish had a priest but bishops were few and far between, just as today.

## What difference *can* it make?

Seeing how the practice of Confirmation has differed widely down through the centuries, even falling into long periods of disuse, a more radical question can creep into our mind: Why keep up the practice of Confirmation at all?

One obvious answer is that Confirmation is a part of our tradition. It is a part of the Catholic heritage. By continuing the practice of Confirmation we show that we accept and continue that heritage.

Still, is this enough? Of course not! Just because we have always confirmed in some way is not a good enough reason for continuing to do it today. There must be more reasons than that.

One important reason is that Confirmation can make a real difference in the lives of young people. It can give you a chance to think about your baptism and about what it means to be a Christian. When you were baptized as an infant, you didn't know what was happening. Now, when you are older, you have a chance to reaffirm your membership in the Church and to say your own "I do" to your baptismal promises.

So Confirmation can indeed make a difference in your life. It can have the effect of a special spiritual awakening, as it had for my wife. Or it can have the effect of being a special reminder of your commitment to Christ and to the Church, as it was for me. A lot depends on you, and on the circumstances surrounding your own Confirmation.

## What difference do you *want* it to make?

Many of us were confirmed before we were ready to make this serious commitment. We said we were willing to be confirmed Christians, and the bishop anointed us with the sign of Christ's cross.

In some ways, it's a question of maturity. If you've already been confirmed, you're older now than you were then. You've recited the Creed, a statement of your beliefs, Sunday after Sunday at Mass. You've learned more about the meaning of your faith. But have you taken the time to make your Christian living more mature as well? Does the meaning your head already knows take shape in actions from your heart?

God always offers you the grace to live up to your baptismal promises and to the commitment that your parents made for you at Baptism. So the important question is, what difference do you allow the sacrament of Confirmation to make in your life? If Confirmation does not seem to have the expected or desired effect, it is not that God has in any way failed you.

When you were confirmed, you renewed the promises that your parents made for you at your Baptism: to believe in God, to be a member of the Church, to avoid sin and lead a moral life. As you are probably aware, there's a lot packed into those simple phrases. There's also a lot of commitment that is demanded of you if you take them seriously.

And how seriously do you take these promises? I believe that being a Christian, especially a confirmed Christian, should make a noticeable difference in a person's life. Jesus once said, "Not everyone who calls me Lord, Lord, will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of my Father" (Matthew 7:21). He meant that saying the words was not enough; choosing to know and do God's will was necessary. Being a confirmed Christian, like being a confirmed soccer player or a confirmed music lover, is a matter of deeds, not words.

## How to *let* it make a difference

You may honestly believe that being a confirmed Christian ought to make a difference in your life, but you don't know how. Or you may realize that your growing Christian maturity ought to have a greater impact on your life, but you're not sure what it should be. Here are a few practical suggestions about living up to your Confirmation.

1. Learn more about what it means to be a Christian. Read the Gospels (Matthew 5—7 is a good place to begin) to see what Jesus asks of his followers. Find a book on how to live the Christian life (there are lots of them) and find one area where you might make an improvement. Ask someone whose faith you respect (age doesn't matter) how he or she tries to live a Christian life.
2. Think about yourself, your own hopes and ambitions, your own values and ideals. Take the time to write them down. Then ask yourself how these stack up against what you find in the Gospels and what you learn about living up to the teachings of Christ. Compare your own goals in life and your own personal behavior in the light of what it means to be a confirmed Christian.
3. If you find differences between the way you are and the way you think a Christian should be, make some honest judgments about which way you want to go. This kind of self-examination is not easy, but the results are very rewarding. You may find yourself faced with some difficult choices, but no one can make them for you.
4. If you want to change your goals or behavior as a result of what you find out about yourself, be practical about it. Don't try to change everything at once. Pray about it, and ask for guidance from someone you respect. And don't try to do it alone. When you feel discouraged, remember it's a lifelong task. Get in touch with other young people in your parish or school who seem to be taking their Christian commitment seriously. Confirmation can and does make a difference—if you allow, even welcome, such change.

**Q.**

You bring up how Confirmation was in the past a lot and I don't care much about history myself. Why do you think it's so important?

**A.**

The past is important because we need to be in touch with our roots. Knowing where we've come from gives us a better sense of who we are and where we are right now. Not having some knowledge of our religious history is like having spiritual amnesia. We can't really know who we are if we have no memory of our past. Learning about Church history is a way of extending our memory all the way back to Christ himself. Knowing where we have come from helps us understand where we are going. We have a right to know why we are asked to be confirmed in the Church.

**Q.**

I feel like I was pressured into being confirmed. Don't you think we should get to decide?

**A.**

In its canons or rules concerning this sacrament, the Church states that you "are obliged to receive this sacrament at the appropriate time." Certainly, you should help to decide, together with your parents and your pastor, when this suitable time has indeed arrived. You don't have to be wildly excited about Confirmation. It's enough to decide that at this point in your life you are willing to be confirmed in the faith you have grown up in, that you are ready to continue as an adult member of the Church, and that you are open to following the lead of the Spirit in your life. Remember, though, you don't have to be perfect, just willing to grow!

**Q.**

You don't say anything about sponsors at all! How important are they to this sacrament? How does a person decide on one?

**A.**

Sponsors are important because they help us to realize that we are not alone in our effort to live as mature Christians. Hopefully, your Baptismal sponsor has been supporting you in your journey of faith thus far and you will want that person to continue to walk with you as your sponsor now. This is the Church's preference for you in this decision. In any case, the person you choose to be your sponsor should be someone from whom you can ask advice as you continue to grow and someone who knows you well enough to say, "This is a fine young person whom I would like to see as a full adult member of our Church."

# Helping a Candidate Choose a Confirmation Name

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Dear Parents,

Most likely, your child as a Confirmation candidate, will appreciate the opportunity to talk with you about choosing a name for Confirmation. As you discuss, consider the following:

## **Choosing a Confirmation Name**

In the Book of Isaiah we read, “I have called you by name: you are mine” (Isaiah 43:1). Your name was spoken aloud on the day of your Baptism and it became part of your identity as God’s child and a member of the Catholic Church. A great deal of thought went into your parents’ choice in naming you. You may be named after a relative, a special family friend, or a saint your parents greatly admire. Now that you have decided to become confirmed, you have the opportunity to think in a new way about your name and how it relates to your decision to be confirmed.

## **Reaffirming Your Baptismal Name**

Although it is traditional to take a new name at Confirmation, it is not required. Instead, you may want to reaffirm your baptismal name (if it is the name of a saint or variation) since the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation are so closely related. Confirmation seals and strengthens the faith and grace you received at Baptism. It completes your Baptism. Reaffirming your baptismal name is a sign of your commitment to live out the promises your parents and godparents made for you at Baptism.

## **Adding a New Name**

You may also choose to add a new name at Confirmation. This decision indicates your new awareness of how Confirmation will help you live as a disciple of Christ. The name you choose should be the name of a saint, or a variation of that name, who has gone before us in faith. Spend time prayerfully reflecting about your choice as this is an important decision. Also, please note that our Bishop requests that you choose a Canonized saint of the same gender. Please note that while many Bible characters and modern-day heroes are highly revered in the Catholic Church, many are not actually *canonized saints* and should not be chosen for this purpose.

## **Research Your Name**

Whether you reaffirm your baptismal name or add a new name at Confirmation, research the life of your Christian namesake. Find out how they serve as an example for your faith journey. Before you are confirmed at St. Agnes Parish, you will be asked to complete an essay form listing the name you have chosen and giving reasons for your choice. The research you do will help you focus on the reasons for your decision.

## **At Confirmation**

During the Confirmation ceremony, the Bishop will ask you for your Confirmation Saint name and, likely, why you chose it. Be prepared with your BEST answer by practicing with your parents and sponsor before the ceremony. You will be asked about your saint at Confirmation practice, so come prepared with your answer.

St. Agnes Parish  
7775 Vanderbilt Beach Rd.  
Naples, FL 34120  
239-592-1949

St. Agnes Parish  
7775 Vanderbilt Beach Rd.  
Naples, FL 34120  
239-592-1949 FAX: 239-325-1150

## Sponsor Eligibility Form – Return by Feb 17, 2010

*You have been asked to be a sponsor. In accepting this very important role, you are urged to reflect on the importance of this commitment. Please read the following and pray about the responsibilities you will be fulfilling in someone's life. After reflection, please sign this statement of eligibility.*

I have received the Sacrament of Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation.

I am sixteen years of age or older.

I participate regularly in Sunday Mass and Communion as a participating Roman Catholic and I fulfill my obligations to my parish to the best of my ability.

I give witness to my faith in Jesus Christ and strive to live out my commitment to the Gospel message.

I am not presently under any restriction which would prevent me from the free exercise of my faith as a member of the Catholic Church.

I am a registered member of \_\_\_\_\_ Parish, which is located in the following city, state: \_\_\_\_\_.

I promise to give my support to \_\_\_\_\_, by my prayers, by my continued interest in his/her faith formation as a Catholic, and by the Christian example of my daily life.

Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Your Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please return to: St. Agnes Parish at the above address or fax by 2/17/10.

# Helping a Candidate Choose a Sponsor

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Dear Parents,

Most likely, your child as a candidate for Confirmation, will appreciate the opportunity to talk with you about choosing a sponsor for Confirmation. As you discuss, consider the importance of the role of the sponsor. A copy of this letter may be helpful to pass on to the chosen sponsor so he/she can be clear about this role in your teen's life.

## **The Role of Sponsors**

A sponsor can make an enormous difference in the preparation of a candidate for the Sacrament of Confirmation. It is important, therefore, that the candidates are encouraged to choose sponsors who are well suited to the role and who will be integral to the preparation process.

The Church's tradition of involving a sponsor in the preparation of candidates for the Sacraments of Christian Initiation is one of our most ancient approaches to faith formation. In the early centuries, when the catechumenate was the entry point for anyone seeking to become a Christian, the sponsor played an extremely vital role.

The sponsor was a living witness and mentor who represented the Christian community (its values, beliefs, behaviors, and so on) to the catechumen. The sponsor would, in turn, witness to the community on behalf of the catechumen's readiness for the initiatory sacraments.

The role of a sponsor was not over with the celebration of the sacraments, however. It was seen as a lifetime commitment, a relationship that would last throughout the individual's journey of faith.

In the early Church the three Sacraments of Christian Initiation were always celebrated at one time; therefore, there was never a different sponsor at Baptism and Confirmation. In subsequent centuries, however, with the separation of Confirmation from Baptism, it became more common to have different persons act as sponsor for those two sacraments.

Both the Code of Canon Law (Canon 893.2) and the introduction to the Rite of Confirmation (5) suggest that in view of contemporary pastoral circumstances, it is desirable to have one's baptismal sponsor act as sponsor at Confirmation. While this remains the ideal, it seems much more important that the sponsor chosen be available and involved with the candidate in a significant way, and be able to offer an authentic example of lived Christian faith.

## **Requirements for acting as a Sponsor**

As a bare minimum, the Code of Canon Law specifies that the requirements for acting as a sponsor at Confirmation (Canon 893) are the same as those for godparents at Baptism (Canon 874). Briefly, that canon directs that the person must have completed their sixteenth year, be fully initiated, live a life of faith, not be the parent, and not be bound by any other canonical restrictions.

## **How do the Sponsor (and Parents) help prepare outside of Confirmation class?**

One of the challenges that might exist occurs when sponsors live at a distance and cannot interact in person with their candidate. However, in this day of instantaneous Internet and cell phone communication, only a little extra effort is required to maintain regular contact between sponsor and candidate. It is important that interaction occurs on a consistent basis and that sponsors are informed about meetings or information they may have missed because of their distance.

St. Agnes, in partnership with RCL's Confirmation preparation program, agrees strongly with the important observation made in the General Directory for Catechesis that growth in faith results from one's involvement in an entire network of relationships within the believing community. (See GDC 141, 158, 254, 257.) Given this perspective, it is clear why the role of sponsor in the formation process is so important.

Following each Confirmation session, homework will be assigned including "Reflections with my Family." Reflections can also be completed with the sponsor for reinforcement and fostering of the sponsor-candidate relationship. Frequent and regular faith sharing during and after the sacrament preparation period is vital to this very special relationship. Any variety of communication such as face-to-face conversations, telephone, letters, or email should be used. If the sponsors live locally, they are encouraged to attend the parent meetings, special masses, and the parent portion of the retreat with their candidate.

Be creative and encouraging in all that you do with your student!

## **What if the Sponsor cannot be present at the Confirmation Ceremony?**

If the sponsor cannot be present at the Confirmation Ceremony, a parent or guardian is allowed as a "proxy" or "stand-in" at the rehearsal and ceremony. The sponsor's life-long role and requirements still apply.

**St. Agnes Parish  
7775 Vanderbilt Beach Rd.  
Naples, FL 34120  
[www.StAgnesNaples.org](http://www.StAgnesNaples.org)  
239-592-1949**



3. What event in the life of this saint most impressed me? Why? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. Every saint is known for a particular quality or virtue. What special virtues did this saint have?

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5. How could I imitate this saint today? Be specific! \_\_\_\_\_

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6. When the Bishop asks me why I picked this Confirmation name, I will reply: \_\_\_\_\_

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Candidate's Printed Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent's Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

Candidate's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Essay is due by 2/17/10 to the St. Agnes Faith Formation Office. Fax: 239-325-1150.  
Please make yourself a copy. The original will not be returned.*

## Parent Commitment for Sacrament Preparation of their Child

Please read carefully before signing.

I attended the Parent Sacramental Preparation Information meeting on (circle one)

Sept. 10, 2008 (for Grades 6-12)

Sept. 17, 2008 (for Grades 2-5) other \_\_\_\_\_

I received a copy of the Sacramental Preparation Packet containing the required forms and schedules.

I received a copy of the Diocesan required knowledge for Confirmation candidates so that I may help my child grow in wisdom and knowledge of the sacrament in which he/she is preparing.

I understand the mutual support and partnership that my family is participating in through the St. Agnes Parish Community.

**SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION IS FOR "A WAY OF LIFE."** I understand that sacramental preparation is for *a way of life*, not for a single event, and that it is most effective when a sacramental life is modeled in the family. I am willing to make the commitment to participate regularly at Sunday liturgies with my child in addition to us both attending all related sacramental and faith formation meetings, classes, retreats, and rehearsals to the best of our ability. I realize that failure to support my child's preparation in the home or excessive absences (as determined by the Faith Formation Director) could result in postponement of a sacrament until a later time.

**FAITH FORMATION IS A "LIFETIME PROCESS."** I understand that regardless of sacraments received or yet to be received, I promise to continue my child's faith formation because I understand that faith formation is a lifetime process of ongoing conversion at every age.

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(Print) Parent Name \_\_\_\_\_

(Print) Student's Full Name \_\_\_\_\_



# St. Agnes Parish

7775 Vanderbilt Beach Rd., Naples, FL 34120  
239-592-1949 ☩ Fax: 239-325-1150 ☩ www.StAgnesNaples.org

## 2009-2010 Confirmation Certificate Information Form

Confirmation Parents: Please print neatly and do not leave any lines blank to ensure that your child's Confirmation certificate will be recorded and printed accurately. Return to the Faith Formation Office by **February 17, 2010 (Ash Wednesday).**

*Padres: Por favor escriba en letra de imprenta, claramente, y no deje ningún espacio en blanco, así el certificado tendrá la información correcta. Devuélvalo a la oficina antes del 02-17-2010.*

Student's Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Nombre completo del estudiante Grado*

Date of Birth \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_ Born in (City) \_\_\_\_\_, State \_\_\_\_\_  
*Fecha de Nacimiento Ciudad de nacimiento Pais Estado*

Date of Baptism \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_ Church of Baptism \_\_\_\_\_  
*Fecha de Bautismo Nombre de la Iglesia donde fue bautizado*

Church of Baptism mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Dirección de la Iglesia donde fue bautizado*

City \_\_\_\_\_ ST \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_  
*Ciudad Estado Area postal*

**Student's chosen Confirmation Name:** Saint \_\_\_\_\_

Father's First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Nombre del padre Apellido*

Mother's First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Maiden: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Nombre de la madre Apellido de soltera Apellido*

\*Sponsor's Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Patrocinador*

\*Sponsors can be a godparent of the candidate or a close friend or family member who is viewed by others as a model Catholic. Refer to the "Helping a Candidate Choose a Sponsor" and "Sponsor Eligibility" forms for complete information. All forms and information can be printed from the church web site by following the link to Faith Formation.