

A Sponsor on the Way

*They were filled with the Holy Spirit,
And they began to speak. ACTS 2*

Not long ago, the sponsor for Confirmation was a friend or relative who showed up at the ceremony of Confirmation - and that was about it. Well, an ancient way of sponsoring has been rediscovered.

In the early years of the Church, sponsors played a practical role in the initiation process. A person often wanted to join the Church because of a Christian's personal example. Naturally, that Christian became the interested person's sponsor.

The sponsor walked with the new member, helping him or her understand the way of Christ and the Church. The sponsor served as a model of what it meant to be a person committed to traveling on the way of Christ.

That is where you come in. Today, the Church has reclaimed this ancient way of sponsoring new members. The Church recognizes sponsors as people who are guides, models, friends, companions, and witnesses - responsible people the parish entrusts to accompany the candidates on the way to Confirmation.

A young candidate for initiation from our parishes has chosen *you* to be his or her sponsor as he or she approaches the initiation sacrament of Confirmation. Are you ready for it? You probably are, for the role you have been asked to play is not as scary as it sounds. In fact, sponsoring a young person on the way to Confirmation can be an exciting and rewarding adventure for both of you.

Qualities of a Sponsor

You are not expected to be all-knowing or all-perfect. But as a sponsor, a few qualities that your candidate can expect from you are:

- 1. Hospitality.** A sponsor must be a welcoming and inclusive person - a host. The sponsor needs to be open to accepting and discovering the person and the gifts - sometimes hidden - of his or her candidate. Your personal welcome helps the candidate discover both the comfort and the challenge offered by the community of faith. You can help establish a sense of belonging in your candidate.
- 2. Prayerfulness.** By being a person of prayer - willing to pray and trying to pray - you will be a person responsive to the needs of your candidate and to the messages of the Holy Spirit.
- 3. Respectfulness.** As a sponsor, you need to remain open and considerate. You need to value and esteem the opinions, ideas, gifts, talents, hopes, fears, and feelings of your candidate. You also need to show that respect by treating the sharing you and your candidate do with confidentiality.
- 4. Generosity.** In the hustle and bustle of today, just to *be* a sponsor takes a certain generosity. You will be called upon to be generous with many precious commodities - time, talent, patience, and prayer. Likewise, you cannot be penny - pinching with your feelings. Your candidate needs to see and experience what you feel strongly about.
- 5. Faithfulness.** Faithfulness does not mean perfection. As a sponsor, your faith does not have to be perfect, solid, or totally secure. Rather, it must be steadfast, seeking, open, and growing. The community is made up of people on the way - people who have not yet arrived! It is all right to let your candidate see that your faith - like his or hers - is still seeking. That makes it abundantly clear that your faith is *alive*.

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Your Responsibilities

You will be called upon to participate in some or all of the following duties:

- Accompany your candidate to the Invitation ritual. This Recognition Liturgy will be announced at each of the individual parishes.
- Regularly communicate with your candidate throughout the entire process.
- Commit yourself to daily prayer for your candidate.
- **Attend any of the class sessions with your candidate.**
- **Meet privately with and help your candidate with his or her questions.**
- Be willing to contact a member of the Confirmation team if you have any questions or concerns.
- At the conclusion of the candidate's discussion sessions with you, you may write a brief letter to your candidate which outlines what you feel are your candidate's talents or gifts and which pledges your continued prayer and support.
- **Write a letter to Julie Soehren to describe the growth and readiness of your candidate.**
- **Attend the rehearsal session for the rite of Confirmation with your candidate.**
- **Join with the parish and your candidate in celebrating the sacrament of Confirmation.**
- Continue as a support to the newly confirmed person as he or she discovers more and more about the Treasury of his or her own faith along the way.

Sponsor's Prayer

Welcoming Lord, stand by me.
Favor me with insight into hearts hungry for welcome,
with hospitality to accept and respect the gifts they bear,
with generosity to share my gifts,
with faith to share the gift that is you.

Fill me with your powerful Spirit that I might lead, guide, sponsor, and support.

Speak your living Word to me and to the one I sponsor along your way.
And when I don't know what to say,
Keep me quiet, Lord,
and let your Spirit do the talking.

Amen.

This is what we proclaim
to you:
what was from the beginning,
what we have heard,
what we have seen with our
eyes,
what we have looked upon
and our hands have touched -
we speak the word of life!
(1 JOHN 1:1)

Thank you for being a Sponsor for
the Confirmation Program for the
Holy Cross Area Faith Community
Serving the Parishes of
Cathedral of the Holy Trinity and
St. Mary's, New Ulm,
St. John's, Searles, St. Gregory, Lafayette
and St. George, West Newton Twsp.
Diocese of New Ulm