Confirmation Parent-Student Handbook
Church of Santa Maria, Orinda

The Sacrament of Confirmation is a central and integral part of Santa Maria's Youth Ministry program. Confirmation is one of the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist) in the Catholic faith, and thus signifies and strengthens the recipient's commitment to the Church, the Gospel, and to his/her parish community. Our program is structured to allow eligible students to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation after approximately two years of preparation.

This handbook will give an outline of the program's requirements and an explanation of each of the elements of the program.

– Program Requirements –

To be eligible for Confirmation, a candidate must be baptized, and, in general, must have attained the "age of reason" (7 years old). The candidate should participate regularly and actively in the sacramental and liturgical life of his or her parish, and desire to gain a deeper relationship with Christ as His disciple. In the Diocese of Oakland, those being confirmed in youth Confirmation programs (such as this one) should receive the sacrament by the age of sixteen.

If these preliminary requirements have been met, the program requirements for the candidates at Santa Maria are as follows:

- Attendance at Sunday Confirmation meetings: These meetings, beginning in late September or early October, are aimed at helping the teens to grow and become active in their faith, including a thorough curriculum (outlined below) preparing the candidates for the sacrament.
- Attendance and Ministry at Sunday Mass: The Mass is a central part of our faith, and our Confirmation program would not be complete without it. Santa Maria offers Mass at 5pm on Saturdays, and 8:30am, 10:30am, and 5:00pm on Sundays. Each time there is a C1/C2 meeting, there is a "Youth Mass," at which attendance is mandatory for all Confirmation candidates.
- Participation in one weekend-long retreat per year: Three overnight retreat opportunities are offered: the fall C2 Retreat, the winter LinC Retreat, and the spring C1 Retreat. Dates will be emailed and updated on the calendar.
- Completion of one service outreach engagement per year: Saturday of Service opportunities will be offered about once a month at places like St. Anthony's Justice Education in San Francisco, Friends of Sausal Creek in Oakland, and more. Service may be done outside YM events for just reasons.

– Confirmation Curriculum –

The requirements of the Oakland Diocese state that candidates for Confirmation must complete a minimum of 72 hours of engagement. This breaks down to approximately 3.6 hours per month for a two-year program. In order to fulfill these hours, candidates will meet for a set number of Sundays (generally scheduled to avoid holiday weekends;

please see calendar for more details) from September through May for approximately 1.5 hours of formal instruction per meeting; the rest of the hours are taken up in the Youth Masses, annual overnight retreats, and service opportunities.

The curriculum of the meetings is aimed at forming disciples of Christ who are in a relationship of "communion and intimacy" with Jesus. In order to complete the objectives of the Diocesan Standards for Confirmation, these meetings will incorporate distinct parts of a complete program in order to cater to different learning styles as well as foster a deeper understanding and love of the Catholic faith:
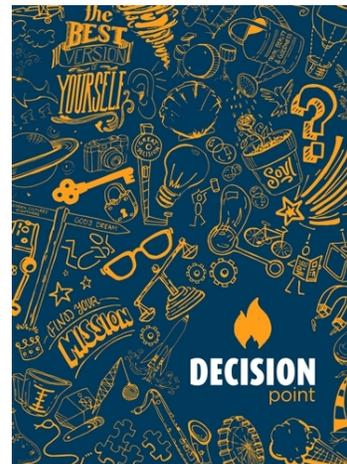
Prayer and Worship

It could be said that the most important part of any relationship – whether divine or human – is communication, and the most common means of communication with the divine is prayer. Each activity, whether social or instructional, will be led and concluded by an appropriate prayer. Different means of prayer will be explored, from communal to silent, adoration to contrition, so that the candidates will get a taste of the richly varied prayer traditions of our faith.

Catechesis and Evangelization

We will be using and supplementing the Decision Point Confirmation Program published by Dynamic Catholic, which has been designed specifically to engage young Catholics in a meaningful conversation about our faith in preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation. This program acknowledges the need for conversation and conversion of heart, mind, and soul, and is a useful tool for sacramental preparation.

An online version of our program is available at www.dynamiccatholic.com/confirmation, and there is also a Decision Point app available for both Apple and Android. Please use these resources to review and start conversations about our program's content with your teen.

Liturgy and the Sacraments

An important portion of our Confirmation curriculum is designed to encourage our youth to appreciate the richness of our age-old rituals, especially the Eucharist.

Youth will be required to sign up for certain liturgical ministries, ranging from being a Minister of the Word to greeting the parish community before weekend Masses. Youth may sign up for a ministry they are comfortable with, and will receive the appropriate instruction for new ministries they are interested in. Candidates will minister at a minimum of one Youth Mass per program year.

– Code of Conduct –

In order to accomplish quality youth ministry for our young people, it is important to maintain an atmosphere in which the teens are comfortable praying, learning, and expressing themselves at all times. If a student is being disruptive in any manner, this halts the progress of the program and is not fair to the others. You have received a covenant between parents, youth, and the Youth Minister which outlines behavioral expectations in relation to the Confirmation program. If anyone breaks the terms of the covenant, there will be consequences according to the severity of his or her action. If appropriate, a simple warning will suffice; more severe actions will result in the calling of a meeting between the Youth Ministry Coordinator, the youth, the parents, and, if necessary, the pastor, in order to determine a course of action.

Attendance

Attendance is expected of youth at each of the scheduled meetings. If, for any reason, the candidate is unable to attend one of the scheduled Confirmation Meetings as outlined in the calendar (see the website's calendar for the most up-to-date calendar), or if there is grave reason to arrive tardy or to be picked up early, the Youth Minister should be notified by email at megan@smparish.org at least one day before the meeting. Please note that the candidate may not leave early unless their parent, guardian, or specified person comes to the door to get them.

For each Confirmation Meeting or mandatory event missed, including monthly Youth Masses, candidates are required attend a makeup session either by attending an event (to be agreed upon by candidate and Youth Minister) or by helping lead a Wednesday night Middle School Youth Group session (from 7-8:30pm with prep from 6-7pm).

 No more than two absences are allowed per program year for the Confirmation program. More than two absences of a youth from the Confirmation Meetings and requirements may result in a delay of the Sacrament, so please ensure that the Confirmation Meetings are a high priority.

– Parent and Family Participation –

Parents are essential to the course and depth of their child's faith formation, as they are the first preachers of the faith to their children by their word and example (cf. *Lumen Gentium* 11). By asking questions of your son or daughter about what is happening in our Confirmation meetings, looking over any handouts they bring home, checking out the videos and discussion guides online, encouraging them to participate in YM events, and discussing our Confirmation topics regularly at home, our youth see that it is not only the Santa Maria staff and Youth Ministry team that care about our

Catholic faith, but also you, their role models. Email updates will be sent regarding the meetings, and curriculum material is available at www.dynamiccatholic.com/confirmation.

Candidates and their families should also attend Mass *together* on a weekly basis, to continue formation of the faith community. While it is understandable that on rare occasions it may seem impossible to attend any one of the services offered (either Saturday Vigil Mass or any of the Sunday Masses), we expect that serious effort be made by families to fulfill this joyful weekly obligation.[*]

Required Parent Volunteering

The Pastoral Team requires parents to give of their time and talents by helping out with certain Youth Ministry events. You will have the opportunity to sign up for events as varied as chaperoning service opportunities and cooking meals for retreats. Please see the "Parent Volunteer Opportunities" section of the registration form.

The Oakland Diocese mandates that all those who come in contact with minors while volunteering for any church-sponsored activity (including Youth Ministry activities) must be fingerprinted by LiveScan for a background check and complete a safety course hosted by VIRTUS. This course may be completed in either on their website, or at a live session offered at any parish in the Diocese. More information will be available in the parish bulletins and emails about any upcoming live sessions.

– Communication –

Email will be the primary means of communication between the Youth Minister and families. Please expect an update on the goings-on in the Confirmation program by email every two weeks. Otherwise, families are encouraged to communicate with the Youth Minister, staff, and volunteers either in person, by email, or by phone.

If you would like a question answered immediately, it is possible that the answer to your question is present at our Youth Ministry website at www.santamariaym.org. This page and its contents will be updated as needed to reflect the current state of the program.

Please also note our presence with informal content on Instagram and Twitter at @smyouthmin.

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[*]Please remember that attendance at the Youth Masses on Sundays with Confirmation sessions is a mandatory part of the Confirmation program. This guarantees that the Sunday obligation will be fulfilled, and also fosters liturgical community between the Confirmation candidates themselves and with their broader Santa Maria faith community. On the other weekends of the month, families are encouraged to attend any Mass of their choice.

Conflict Resolution

If, by any chance, you have a complaint about the way a situation is or was handled, the ideal is that the Pastoral Team, Youth Minister, teen, and parents work through these situations together as a trusting team. We urge you to follow these recommended steps: 1) Contact the person directly involved in the situation; if you are not satisfied with the outcome after this conversation, then 2) Contact the person's immediate supervisor. We want all concerns to be resolved as quickly as possible. All comments, suggestions, and concerns are welcome. Let's work through them together step by step so we can continue to make our Youth Ministry program a success for the benefit of our young people!

– Santa Maria General Information –

Santa Maria Parish – 40 Santa Maria Way, Orinda, CA 94563 – (925) 254-2426

Pastoral Team

Father George Mockel	Pastor – gmockel@smparish.org
Deacon Rey Encarnacion	Deacon – dcnrey@smparish.org | x301
Deacon Jim Pearce	Deacon – dcnpearce@smparish.org | x307
Deacon Maurice Custodio	Deacon Emeritus – x307
Megan Arteaga	Youth Ministry Coordinator – megan@smparish.org | x308
Sr. Magdalena Duong, LHC	Bookkeeper – sistermagdalena@smparish.org | x302
Sr. Pauline Hoang, LHC	Pastoral Care of the Sick – sisterpauline@smparish.org | x309
Sr. Theresa Lan Do, LHC	K-5 Faith Formation – sistertd@smparish.org | x306
Tony Millette	Music and Liturgy – tmillette@smparish.org | x310
Linda Zunino	Administrative Assistant – lzunino@smparish.org | x301

Appendix A: Online Resources –

Santa Maria Parish: www.santamariaorinda.com

- This is the home page for Santa Maria Church. On it you can find general information about parish activities, and contact information for our ministries.

Instagram: www.instagram.com/smyouthmin

- Our Instagram account displays both reminders for upcoming events and deadlines as well as posts photos of YM events and meetings. If anyone is interested in what's going on with YM at Santa Maria, check out #smyouthmin!

Twitter: www.twitter.com/smyouthmin

- Our Twitter account is mostly geared toward recording special events in real time – for example, service mission trips and retreats.

Facebook: www.facebook.com/SantaMariaOrinda

- Our parish Facebook page has updates on everything, and will have announcements of events and albums with YM photos.

Decision Point Program: www.dynamiccatholic.com/confirmation/ view-program

- All of the video content and much of our discussion prompts and prayers are available on this page. Stay informed on what is happening in our Confirmation meetings and see what you can ask your teens about!

Oakland Diocese Confirmation Standards: http://www.oakdiocese.org/ youth-and-young-adults/youth-ministry

- Go to this page and, in the menu on the right that's labeled "Resources," click on "Download English" to read up on what it is the diocese requires of our Confirmation curriculum.

VIRTUS: https://www.virtusonline.org

- VIRTUS is a Catholic organization dedicated to raising awareness and prevention of mistreatment of children and the elderly, and the Oakland Diocese requires all volunteers working with minors (or at-risk elderly) to complete the course entitled "Protecting God's Children for Adults" before beginning volunteer work.