

2021 Confirmation Parent/Sponsor Retreat

Hello Confirmation candidates, parents and sponsors! While it saddens me that we cannot all be together in person for our Parent/Sponsor Retreat this year, please know that you have all been in my thoughts and prayer constantly this year! I hope that this time of reflection is fruitful for all of you and that it brings you into deeper relationship with one another and with our God who loves us so very much. Before we meet again virtually on Sunday, February 21st invite you to set aside some time together to pray through this reflection and have an open and honest conversation with one another.

Year 2 Confirmation candidates, you should pray this reflection with whomever you have chosen as a Confirmation sponsor (if you have questions about who that should be, please contact me ASAP). Year 1 Confirmation candidates, since you are not asked to choose a sponsor until next year, I invite you to pray this reflection with your parents, guardians or another adult family member with whom you are comfortable talking about your faith.

One of my favorite stories in all of scripture is the story of the road to Emmaus. As we come together as confirmation candidates, parents and sponsors, companions on a journey of faith, this story seems particularly fitting. In this gospel story, there are two disciples walking along the road to Emmaus. It had been three days after Jesus died on the cross and buried and rumors began to spread about how his body had mysteriously gone missing from the tomb. The two disciples on their way to the city of Emmaus were discussing this when Jesus, now risen from the dead, approached them and asked if he could walk with them. The disciples said yes, but were not aware that the risen Christ was walking alongside them.

We are going to spend some time with this passage today. Start by reminding yourselves that you are in the presence of a God who loves you, sometimes we do this with the sign of the cross. Invite God into your time together today and ask that the Holy Spirit gives you the courage to be open to whatever God might want to reveal to you.

I'm going to ask you to read the passage twice. First the confirmation candidate should read it while the parent/sponsor listens and tries to place themselves in the story. Imagine you are walking with the two disciples as they are approached by the risen Christ and pay attention to your thoughts, feelings and emotions as you journey with them. Then, switch and have your parent/sponsor read the passage while you, the candidate listen and place yourself in the story. Pay attention to any words, phrases, feelings or emotions that come up as you read and listen.

Once you have read through the passage twice, or even three times if you wish, go ahead and go through the reflection questions together. You can find the passage on the next page.

Each participant (candidates and parents/sponsors) should fill out the google form found in your email once you have done your reflection together. Thank you and let me know if you have any questions!

The Road to Emmaus

Luke 24:13-35

New American Bible (Revised Edition) (NABRE)

Now that very day two of them were going to a village seven miles[a] from Jerusalem called Emmaus, and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred. And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him.

He asked them, "What are you discussing as you walk along?" They stopped, looking downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?" And he replied to them, "What sort of things?" They said to him, "The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him. But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel; and besides all this, it is now the third day since this took place.

Some women from our group, however, have astounded us: they were at the tomb early in the morning and did not find his body; they came back and reported that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who announced that he was alive. Then some of those with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women had described, but him they did not see."

And he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures. As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther. But they urged him, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning [within us] while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?" So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them who were saying, "The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!" Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Reflection Questions:

Teens, ask your parent/sponsor these questions:

1. What parts of the story of the road to Emmaus stuck out to you? How did it feel to place yourself in the story? Did anything come up as you reflected on the passage in this way?
2. In the beginning of the passage, the disciples don't realize that Jesus is walking with them. What makes it difficult for you to recognize Christ in your daily life?
3. The disciples seem to doubt the news that the women at the tomb proclaimed, that Jesus had risen. Have you ever struggled to believe something that the church teaches?
4. When Jesus realizes their confusion, he begins to walk them through the scriptures and show them all the ways that his coming was foretold. Who has been a mentor to you in your faith life and helped you to understand things?
5. At the end of the passage, the disciples recognize Jesus when he breaks bread with them, Have you ever had a "breaking bread moment"? A time when Christ's presence has been really clear in your life?
6. Why did you choose to be confirmed in the Catholic Church? Why do you hope that I am Confirmed?

Parents/sponsors for teens:

1. What parts of the story of the road to Emmaus stuck out to you? How did it feel to place yourself in the story? Did anything come up as you reflected on the passage in this way?
2. In the beginning of the passage, the disciples don't realize that Jesus is walking with them. What makes it difficult for you to recognize Christ in your daily life?
3. The disciples seem to doubt the news that the women at the tomb proclaimed, that Jesus had risen. Have you ever struggled with doubt in your faith? In what ways?
4. When Jesus realizes their confusion, he begins to walk them through the scriptures and show them all the ways that his coming was foretold. What qualities are you looking for in a spiritual mentor and/or sponsor? What makes you feel safe to ask questions and share openly?
5. At the end of the passage, the disciples recognize Jesus when he breaks bread with them, Have you ever had a "breaking bread moment"? A time when Christ's presence has been really clear in your life?
6. Why do you want to be Confirmed? What does it mean to you to be Confirmed?

After going through the discussion questions, parents/sponsors, I invite you to pray this prayer over your confirmation candidate. If you are comfortable doing so, I invite you to extend your hand over them or place in on their head or shoulder. This is a symbolic way to invite the Holy Spirit into your time of prayer and blessing.

Closing prayer

I pray for the GIFT OF KNOWLEDGE for you: that you may be smart about yourself and others, that your vision will be 20/20 about life, and that God will touch your heart.

I pray for the GIFT OF UNDERSTANDING for you: that you will be able to untie the knots of life, that you will become non-judgmental, and that God will expand your heart to love and care as God does.

I pray for the GIFT OF WISDOM for you: to catch on to the mystery and truth of life and to find God in the restless, empty, quiet, or crowded moments.

I pray for the GIFT OF COURAGE for you: that as you walk in this world, you feel prepared and that you might give God all your questions, struggles, hurts, and disappointments.

I pray for the GIFT OF PIETY for you: that you will know a reverence and respect for everything and a piety that will teach you to pray, to forgive, and to build a relationship with God.

I pray for the GIFTS OF WONDER AND AWE (Fear of the Lord) for you: that your attitude toward God is open, humble, and hopeful, and that you are always enthusiastic about God's presence.

I pray for the GIFT OF COUNSEL for you: that you will seek help when you need it and give help when others need it. I pray that this gift helps you make morally good choices that are healthy for your life.

Amen.