

Confirmation Journal

Dear Confirmation Students and Mentors:

This journal is a guide for you to use to start a dialogue necessary to share your stories of, and to wrestle with questions about, your faith. It is not meant to be a worksheet that you need to fill out and return like a homework assignment. It is meant to give you questions and information to facilitate your discussions. Use the pages as conversation starters and write down anything that you think is worthy of remembering...quotes you heard, answers you thought of, your opinions about the issues, etc.. **Mentors, you will be responsible to keep the packet and help the student get it back to one of the parish offices before May 5th, 2012** The most important thing on each page is your signature, showing me that you did indeed go through the information with the student. I will leave the rest up to your discretion.

Please understand, there is nothing educators can put on paper that is as powerful as the relationship you are forming through your willingness to talk about the important stuff of life. A relationship built on trust and caring, honesty and candor, encouraged and protected by God. Please be respectful of each other by keeping whatever is said in these discussions private, as this will encourage open dialogue and enable both people to confess doubts and ask questions about issues they are wrestling with.

I think faith is more like a wrestling match than a dance! If you are smoothly sailing along without any questions or doubts, you are probably not growing “muscles” in your faith. It is through the wrestling matches with God, where both of you are putting in effort to seek and understand each other, that you form the powerful bonds of friendship with God. So go ahead and ask questions – of us as staff, of each other, of other Catholic resources. It is through loving and respectful dialogue that we grow together as Disciples of Christ.

Please feel free to ask us questions as well. You can reach us by phone or by email at the addresses below. Thank you both for your willingness to try this.

Blessings on you both,

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Becoming Disciples of Christ

Student Name: _____

Becoming a Disciple of Christ is not so much a willingness to go through a training session, as it is your being willing to go through a daily “conversion” in your commitment to follow Jesus of Nazareth. Most days we fail in this commitment and must therefore rise again the next day, renew our commitment and start again. Can you think of an example of a time you felt you had failed God so badly that you thought you should give up on the whole “Christian thing”??

Can you think of an example where you had a “conversion” experience and wholeheartedly turned your heart back to God?

St. Paul talks of our faith journey as a “race”. If you look at your faith journey today, where would you say you were in your “race”? At the starting gates? At the midway points? On the sidelines? Near the finish line? Just hanging in on the track as best you can? Still home in bed???

In what ways is being a Christian Disciple like being a runner?

Knowing that wherever in the race you chose to be, it will require something of you, where would you honestly like to be??

Describe some things you need to do or to change in your life in order to train for “Discipleship”?

Signature of Mentor _____

Joy in Jesus

Student Name _____

There is an odd thing about being a Disciple that bears mentioning. Much of being a Disciple is about disciplining yourself to do the right thing. It often requires us to do things that are difficult for us. Act in ways that our social culture tells us is foolish: giving things away to those who need it, helping the poor, turning the other cheek in disputes, refusing to treat someone as an object for your pleasure, etc... It would seem that, according to our culture, these actions would make us miserable all the time, fighting our instincts and struggling against the culture of being cool.

Think about the best Christians you know.. How would you describe their temperament?? Are they gentle? Kind? Open?? Crabby? Happy? Gloomy sad people?

What difference does it make if you act happy or grumpy when doing Christ's work on earth. After all, isn't it the work that is the most important thing??

We are called not only to act like Christians, but to do so with joy in order to bring a joyful heart to a world full of sadness. Acting like a faithful Disciple of Christ is one of the things that gives Christians the most joy and peace. It is this peace of heart, this joy on our faces that draws others to us in the name of Christ.

That is not to say that your life as a Christian will always be joyful, but to say that we should try to find the joy in our Christian life so as to proclaim to the world, "We believe in Jesus and following Him makes our lives better – Jesus gives us a peace that the world cannot give." Having a close relationship with Jesus gives you the strength to handle difficult things without panicking or despairing. Do you have a way to find a feeling of "peace" in your life now? How often in your everyday life do you attempt to find this feeling?

Do you think that right now you live out your Christian mission with joy or with resignation?

Close your eyes and sit quietly for a few moments – then imagine together that Jesus is sitting right there next to you both. What feeling does this evoke in you??

Signature of Mentor _____

Allies

Student Name: _____

Imagine that you are in the cities and you get the chance to go to a baseball game between the Twins and the Yankees. You are, of course, a loyal Twins fan, but a friend plays for the Yankees and it is your favorite team in the world. You sit in the Twins stadium and try not to cheer for the Yankees, but the game is terrific and you eventually start to shout and clap when the Yankee's make a great play. You notice people around you are staring at you but you can't stop yourself from cheering. You notice another person across the aisle from you – a person near your age who is cheering for the Yankee's too. You meet their eyes and they give you a big smile and a "thumbs up" sign. Immediately you feel encouraged, you have an ally – someone in your corner who believes like you do. You begin cheering together louder and harder than either of you did before. A partner – an ally – someone who believes like you do.

How does this story relate to:

Jesus and His Apostles

Sunday Mass

Telling children about Jesus.

The people we choose as friends.

Jesus understood the importance of having emotional and spiritual supporters. That is why he never sent out his Apostles alone. They were a community who held each other up and supported each other's belief in Jesus, even when the rest of the world tried to change their minds. How careful are you to surround yourself with fellow believers?

Signature of Mentor _____

Time Wasted or Spent

Student Name: _____

According to the book “Confirmation” by RCL Publishing, a research study that polled 2,500 teens about how they spent their time came up with these results. Research showed that in an average week, 12 – 24 year olds spend 16.7 hours online. 13.6 hours watching television. 12 hours listening to the radio. 7.7 hours talking on the phone and 6 hours reading books and magazines.

Think about your week – does this accurately reflect how you spend your time?

Time spent on anything reflects its priority in our lives. If you spend 18 – 20 hours a week on a sport, that reflects it carries a pretty high priority in your life. Right? Make a list of what your week looks like: Write down the activities you do and how much time you spend on them.

As you look on your lists, do these lists accurately reflect your priorities?
Are there things that should be on your list of things to do that are not?

Is becoming closer to God something you want for your life? If so, lets do this exercise:

Mark the things on your list that pull you closer to God and increase your spirituality.
Mark the things on your list that pull or tempt you away from God.
Mark the things that do neither of these.

What in your life needs to be changed in order to reflect your desire to grow closer to God?

Signature of Mentor _____

Morality Choices

Student Name: _____

Do you believe in this sentence?

“What you watch, see, and do defines what you become.”

Morality is all about making choices that reflect the values and beliefs you have assimilated over your lifetime of experiences. Up to this point, what or who has had the most impact on your morality? (parents, church, TV, peers, cultural influences???)

Each of you think of three choices that you have had to make this year and write them down below.

Look each one over carefully and answer the following questions:

What were you saying “yes” to?

What were you saying “no” to by making this choice the way you did?

(identify the issues surrounding the choice you made and clarify the moral dilemma)

Signature of Mentor: _____

The Peace of Christ

Student Signature: _____

Earlier we discussed how Christians should show the joy they felt at being loved by Christ. We talked about our joy at receiving peace in our hearts as Christians. In the Old Testament wishing someone “peace” or shalom is referring to a feeling of oneness or harmony with God and all creation. The early church came to recognize Jesus as the “Prince of Peace”. Jesus associated this gift of peace with both forgiveness of sin and healing.

Look up the follow passages and see how Jesus uses this phrase to show the Disciples how to offer Christ’s peace to those they try to evangelize.

Luke 10:1-6 and 8-9

Luke 24:36-49

We often ask in worship for the Peace of Christ to come upon us and bring us joy. This only makes sense to us if we recognize that the coming of Christ’s peace upon us is his way of healing our sinfulness and welcoming us back into his loving embrace. This is the wish behind saying : Peace be with you.

Assignment: Next time you are in Mass and you turn to offer someone the “sign of peace” say “Peace be with you” with meaning....say it as a prayer that they will be forgiven all sinfulness and be welcomed into the arms of Christ. As you wish this blessing upon others, remember that you cannot ask for forgiveness for others unless you are willing to give forgiveness to those who have hurt you.

Make a pact with each other to forgive someone who you have been holding a grudge against as a way to gain the Peace of Christ for yourself. Help each other to do this by praying for each other during the time you are apart and remember to ask each other how you did when you visit together again.

Signature of Mentor: _____

How are we to live??

Student's signature: _____

The Catechism defines Jesus as the perfect model for how to live our lives:
He shows us how to be loving and forgiving.
How to look to God for all our needs.
How to be a servant leader – a humble gentle leader.
How to look to God for direction and be obedient to God.

In Mass we read the story of The Rich Young Man. (Luke 18:18-30) The rich young man admitted to already knowing that he had to follow the commandments to have eternal life. But then he asked Jesus what more he should do? Why do you suppose he asked Jesus this question? Talk about this with your sponsor.

Below are some scenarios you talked about in small groups ... ask your sponsor how they would handle these situations. ☺

Scenarios:

Answer how you would handle these in light of Catholic Social Teaching guidelines.

You are walking down St. Germain in Downtown St. Cloud with a group of friends and you see a poorly dressed man is sitting on the sidewalk. As you come near, the man searches your face and lifts up his hand.....one of your friends says "Push off Loser". How do you respond to this situation?

You had a game or performance last night and didn't get a chance to get homework done. Your friend tells you that you can just use his/her homework. You know that there's a chance that you could get caught and then both you and your friend will be in trouble. What do you choose to do?

A new cashier is checking out your purchases at the Mall. You give her a \$50.00 bill expecting about \$10.00 change back. She makes a mistake and gives you back \$20.00. You recognize the mistake she is making and you know that she will probably have to make up the difference to the till at the end of the night. But no one else has noticed, and you could really use the money. What are you going to do?

You are at a friend's house and he/she is showing you their MySpace on the web. As you are sitting there, your friend starts to go to more and more sexually explicit sites. There is no one else in the house but you two.... What is your response??

Mentor Signature _____

Catholic Church Social Teaching

The Church's social teaching is a rich treasure of wisdom about building a just society and living lives of holiness amidst the challenges of modern society.

Life and Dignity of the Human Person

The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. This belief is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching. Nations must protect the right to life by finding increasingly effective ways to prevent conflicts and resolve them by peaceful means. We believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.

Call to Family, Community, and Participation

The person is not only sacred but also social. How we organize our society in economics and politics, in law and policy directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. Marriage and the family are the central social institutions that must be supported and strengthened, not undermined.

Rights and Responsibilities

The Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Therefore, every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities--to one another, to our families, and to the larger society.

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

A basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring. In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgment (Mt 25:31-46) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.

The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

The economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected--the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to the joining of unions, to private property, and to economic initiative.

Solidarity

We are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they may be. Loving our neighbor has global dimensions in a shrinking world. At the core of the virtue of solidarity is the pursuit of justice and peace. Pope Paul VI taught that "if you want peace, work for justice." The Gospel calls us to be peacemakers. Our love for all our sisters and brothers demands that we promote peace in a world surrounded by violence and conflict.

Care for God's Creation

We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan, it is a requirement of our faith. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored.