

Introduction

We have been preparing young adults for the sacrament of confirmation for several years now. As you may very well know from experience, this is not always an easy age group to work with. Adolescents often see themselves as apart from the Church community. In our ministry to these young disciples of Jesus, we have found that they are people of faith; they just need to be engaged in their faith—on their level and sometimes on their terms.

Many of the confirmation programs available today seem to focus primarily on the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, a necessary component but not the only one. There is so much more to being confirmed than being able to identify these gifts. Confirmation is also a sacrament of initiation—along with baptism and Eucharist. These three sacraments must be viewed together, but also as part of a lifelong process of faith formation, one that does *not* end after confirmation.

We consider confirmation in these sessions from a liturgical point of view because we believe that the liturgy is a primary source of catechesis. As the Second Vatican Council states, “The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all the Church’s power flows” (*Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy*, 10). So, in these eight sessions, the liturgical rite becomes the focal point for understanding what it means to be a confirmed member of the Catholic Church.

These sessions explore the meaning of the phrases used in the dialogue between the bishop and the candidate. It might be helpful to review these phrases with the candidates before you begin the first session. Visit your par-

ish church with them, for example, and invite them to come forward as they will when they are confirmed. Walk through the dialogue:

“Bishop, my name is N. and I wish to be confirmed.”

“N., be sealed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit.”

“Amen.”

“Peace be with you.”

“And also with you.”

The next time the candidates repeat these words, they will be standing face to face with the bishop, telling him they want to live the rest of their lives as disciples of Jesus Christ!

In using the rite of confirmation to teach about the sacrament, the liturgy itself becomes an integrated event that spiritually touches those being confirmed. This approach allows for more creativity, and creativity is the key when dealing with this age group. The more interactive and engaging your lessons are, the more young people will participate, discuss, and discover.

The layout or design of this book is quite simple. There are eight total sessions. They may be condensed into six sessions or maybe even expanded to ten sessions depending on the time frame and circumstances. Each session is a guide for the catechist or catechetical leader. As with any guide or instruction manual, there is always room for flexibility and adaptation; nothing is set in stone. At the end of each session there is a section called Understanding This Session, which is a guide for helping the candidates grasp the content more fully. At the back of the book, there is information about both the role of the sponsor and the role of the parish community in confirmation preparation.

This program can be adapted for any age group and certainly can be used with RCIA candidates and catechumens. No matter which age group or setting you are working with and within, it is our prayer that you will find this material constructive and useful, always recognizing that it is simply a guide. The real guide—of course—is the Holy Spirit!