

AN INDIVIDUAL CONFIRMATION RETREAT

Welcome to your first Confirmation Retreat

Over the next several days you will be invited to

- reflect on the **experiences**, **relationships**, **ideas**, **beliefs**, and **hopes** that are important to you
- asked to **honestly assess** how you connect life and faith
- explore how you might connect life and faith more effectively

No one is going to tell you what to think feel or believe. You are in charge. If you are honest you will clarify and confirm what you think and believe and perhaps discover some things about yourself, especially your faith.

Don't rush the process. This retreat is not meant to be an exercise you start and finish at one sitting. There will be a number of different activities you will be asked to do and then take time to think about them and respond in some way to the questions raised or experiences you have.



Retreat Basics – understanding the process

What is a retreat?

A retreat is an **intentional** time away to **experience** a new awareness of the presence of God. It is **an opportunity** to explore

- **Where you are right now in your life**
- **Where you have been**
- **Where you want to go**

The value of taking time to **retreat** is that it provides you the chance

- **to see things with fresh eyes** and
- **put things into perspective.**

A Private retreat is a **personal** time of **prayer** and **reflection**. Most often you will be doing your reflection by yourself or perhaps with one other person rather than with a group.

Purposeful pauses - the most important part of this retreat is what we call purposeful pauses.

purposeful pauses

- let you take a breath and listen
- take a deliberate period of rest to let the Word and Whisper of God sink in
- take time to give the Spirit room to speak in silent moments.
- is the **“pause that refreshes.”**

How to participate in this retreat

1. **Find a quiet place** that is comfortable, provides you with some privacy and is conducive to reflection
2. **Build time into your schedule** to do these exercises. Remember don't rush the process.
3. **You will need access to wi-fi** to do many of the exercises
4. Download this packet so you can **record your responses** (or type right into the pdf file)
5. When you have finished the packet make an appointment with Mel Tomal, mtomal@holymfamilyparish.org or Dr. Peg, phanrahan@holymfamilyparish.org for an hour long concluding conversation. Bring or email a copy of your completed packet with you to this meeting.

You need to complete this retreat no later than March 12, 2017



Putting the pieces together How life & faith connect

Life and faith present us with puzzles. We collect the pieces from the important experiences, events and relationships in our lives. Each of us must figure out how the pieces of our puzzle fit together. Each person's life puzzle is unique so the way we put the pieces together makes a difference. Faith adds a special dimension to assembling the puzzle because believers also want to know, *how does my life puzzle connects to the larger picture of what God is doing in my life, in the life of my family, friends and faith community and in the world?*

Let's begin with a prayer (30 minutes)

God, help me piece it all together. Help me to use my imagination to overcome obstacles and to look at old problems in new ways. Help me to remember that there are parts of life that I will have to piece together myself. Guide me as I develop my own method to put the puzzle together.

One of the great things about retreats is that we get to try new things.

During this retreat you will have the opportunity to learn about and practice meditation.

Meditation is an ancient form of prayer used in many religious traditions. Catholics refer to this type of prayer as contemplative, reflective or centering prayer. When we meditate we deliberately spend time in quiet thought focusing on something so as to understand it deeply. Like all things to meditate well takes practice.

Guided Meditation is one way to meditate. A guided meditation is a process by which one or more participants meditate in response to the guidance provided by a teacher, either in person or via a written text, sound recording, video, or audiovisual media comprising music or verbal instruction, or a combination of both.

MEDITATION

the practice of concentrating one's focus upon a sound, image, object, visualization, breathing, movement or attention itself in order to increase awareness of the present moment (also referred to as mindfulness), reduce stress, promote relaxation and enhance personal and spiritual growth.

You can access your first guided meditation at the following YouTube link

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i50ZAs7v9es&list=RDi50ZAs7v9es#t=103>

You can close your eyes or watch the slides. Try it both ways and see what is most effective for you. Many people find doing this kind of guided meditation most effective at the end of the day.

pause & reflect

We do not learn from
experience... we learn
from reflecting on
experience.

- John Dewey

Create a piece of word art by jotting down different words that describe your experience of this guided meditation (i.e.- hard, peaceful, calming, distracting, easy, odd, relaxing...)

guided meditation

Further Reflection

I found it more helpful to

- watch the slides
- close my eyes and just listen to the voice

I feel most centered, focused, relaxed when _____

What helps you to center, focus, relax? _____

one place I always find calming and peaceful is _____

because _____

One person who is a calming presence in my life is _____

What do they do/say that allows them to be a calming presence for you? _____

Life is a journey. How's yours going? (30 minutes)

Listen to Matthew Kelly's reflection **NAVIGATION** @

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=axliNB8f4KQ&t=9s>



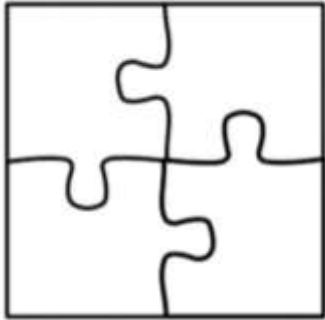
List two ideas from this presentation that you really liked

1. _____

2. _____

3. Which of the following statements best describes where you are on your life journey right now?

- I am on the path heading in the right direction
- I have taken a wrong turn
- I'm lost
- I am at a crossroad and don't know which way to turn
- God is recalculating my spiritual GPS



Beginning on my Puzzle

How long has it been since you've worked on a jigsaw puzzle? The jigsaw puzzle is a wonderful metaphor to help us think about how our life and our faith connect. It's just a matter of figuring out how the pieces fit together.

“The four most important pieces in any puzzle are the corner pieces. The corners anchor the puzzle. From the corners we build borders and frame the image we are piecing together. They give us an idea of the limits of the image and what it will look like. What stands out as the most important pieces in your life? What are the corner pieces?”

Top right _____ Bottom right _____

Top left _____ Bottom left _____

In this retreat, you'll get the chance to focus on four major cornerstones in your life: your family, your friends, your inner life or spirituality, and God's invitation to be in relationship or in a deeper, more honest relationship with you.

Session 1 – The Family Corner (2.5-3 hours)

‘This is a two-part meditation. You will need an open mind and something to write with (if you have chosen to download this packet). For the first part you will also need a quiet place to work. The second part offers you two options: a free-write or a continued meditation. Try them both and see what works best for you.’

Guided Meditation 2

Clear your mind of all thoughts. Some people find it easier to do this is they close their eyes. Focus on steadily taking slow, long breaths in through your nose, and exhaling through your mouth. Once you've relaxed, open your mind to the people in your life. Pay attention to the first five names, faces, or images **of people you think of as family** that pop into your head. Write down the names of these first five people that come to mind.

1 _____ 2 _____

3 _____ 4 _____

5 _____

FREE DRAW

Sometimes an image is more powerful than words

Continuing Meditation

Direct your focus inward. Focus on another of the five people you identified above. Pay close attention to the thoughts and feelings that enter and exit your mind. Welcome all thoughts as they come, not holding on to any thought that wants to leave. Pay special attention to the overall feeling you have. What image comes to mind when you thought about this person (you can draw your image or download an image and place it here)? What does your meditation tell you about your relationship?





You're Choices Matter –

Listen to this short presentation by Matthew Kelly @

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YK06JrgkVGc>

**to be confirmed or not to be confirmed –
is just one of the choices before you**

List two ideas from this presentation that you feel are worth remembering

1. _____

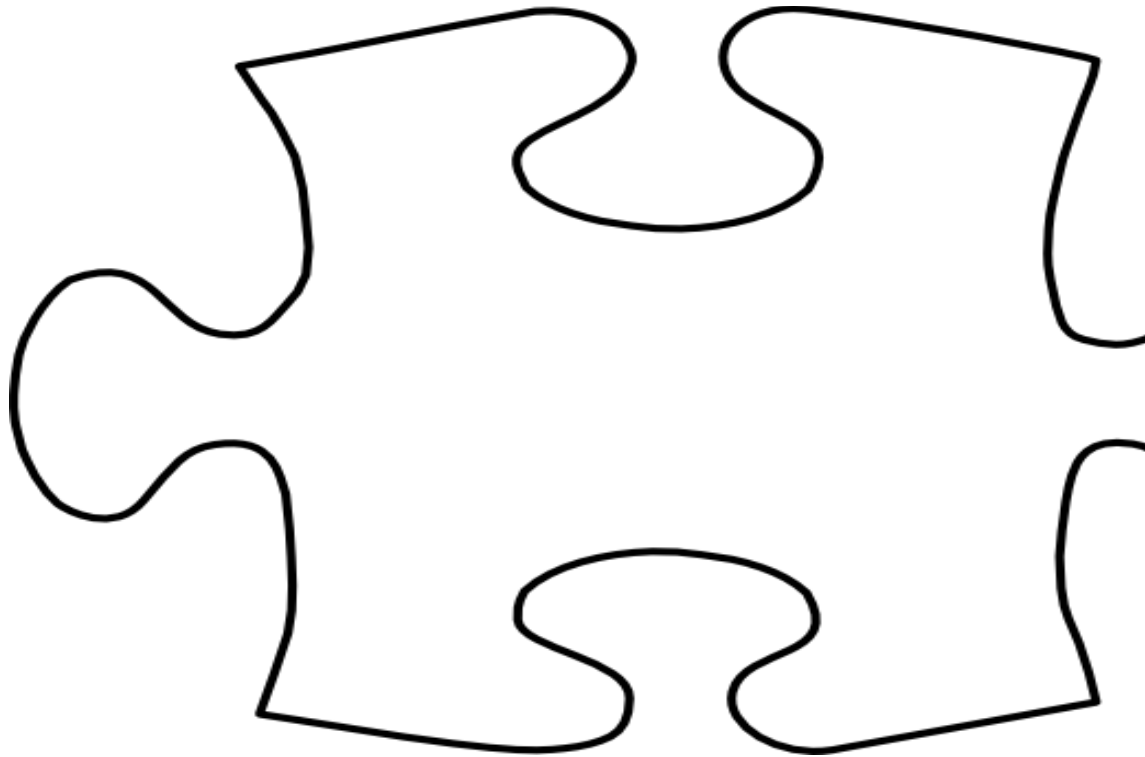
2. _____

Putting it Into Practice

The image in any puzzle may be predetermined, but it's up to you to put that image together. The meditation on your family may help you to see some of the picture more clearly. Your final step for this part of the retreat is off the screen and into your life.

Commit to doing one of the following:

1. Fill the puzzle piece below with thoughts and feelings that came to you during your meditation. Use this piece to remember how these people add and complete the puzzle of your life.



2. Choose one of the people you meditated on today—what can you do for them to show how much they mean to you? Draw from your meditation for inspiration.
3. Think of a family member who has hurt you and you have not forgiven. Decide what it would take for you to forgive them and try to do it.

Loving God, my first corner is my family, and for them I am thankful. They are my immovable anchor. When I look for them, I will find them. They will be there for me whenever I need them. They forgive me when I have done wrong and give me strength when I feel weak or am afraid. In them I trust. Help me to be for them all that they are to me. Let me be a beacon of trust, compassion, and love for the people who are most important to me.

Session 2 – With Friends Like These...

In this part of the retreat you will pray with a modified version of Carole King's song, "You've Got a Friend" (performed by James Taylor). Use each section of the prayer as a reminder of the many people who care about you enough to call you "friend."

Download a version of, "You've Got a Friend" (performed by James Taylor) for this part of the retreat. Here is one from YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xEklou3WFnM> **Listen to the song often while working on this section of the retreat.**

Opening Prayer

When I'm down and troubled
and I need a helping hand
and nothing is going right



I close my eyes
and soon you w
even my darke

Quality Friend

What qualities r

first three things that pop into your h...? Wri

here

1
2
3

List the friends that come to mind when you here this song?

other

Next, who are your friends?

Write down the first three names that pop into your head.

Sometimes we can think of our friends in a certain way. You see one friend as dependable, another as the funny one.

Read the first name you wrote down. Then read each of the three qualities you listed above. How does this person show these qualities? What makes her or him the kind of friend you want to have? Write your answers next to where you have written your friend's name.

Pray

I just call out your name
and I know wherever you are
you'll come running to see me again.
Winter, spring, summer, or fall
all I have to do is call
and you'll be there
I've got a friend



Check this out!

Listen to Matthew Kelly's reflection on **God's Dream for You**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QLu1mCmq4xo&list=PLZisXcLIZva4W9nUMbFudRtBbMkwCIEf&index=4>

List two ideas from this presentation that you find comforting

1. _____

2. _____

List one idea from this presentation that you find challenging. Why do you find it challenging?

1. _____

Which of these statements best describes you (check all that apply)

- I believe in God, but wish I had a better relationship with God
- I feel I know about God but I have never had a real relationship with God
- I have a strong relationship with God
- I am not sure I believe in God
- I feel I had a better relationship with God when I was younger
- I believe there is a God but I do not feel connected to God
- I want my relationship with God to be better...stronger
- I want a better relationship with God, but I don't know how to go about it

I would describe my relationship with God as...

Under the Influence: Positive Pressure

Think about your own personal values—the things you believe in no matter what. Many factors can shape, affect, and change your values. Write down three of your values. Look back on your list of three friends. How does each friend affect, influence, or reinforce these values? Write down your answers.

My personal values

1 _____

How do my friends affect, influence or reinforce this value

2 _____

How do my friends affect, influence or reinforce this value

3 _____

How do my friends affect, influence or reinforce this value

Pray

It's good to know that I've got a friend
People can be so cold
They'll hurt me and desert me
Well, they'll take my soul if I let them

There are moments that remind us that our friends will always be there for us. Think of a time when each of the friends you've chosen has been there for you when you need them. Draw or download a symbol that



would describe that time by the friend's name.

SYMBOL



(friend's name)

SYMBOL

(friend's name)

SYMBOL



(friend's name)

Drawing Conclusions

Look over what you have written about your friends. What you have written may reveal some new elements of your friendships you might have overlooked before.

➤ What surprises you? _____

➤ How has this exercise changed the way you look at your friends? _____

Whether this activity has radically changed the way you look at them, or simply reaffirmed what you've known all along, remember that in these three people, you've got a friend.

Praying with Scripture



In his letters St. Paul wrote to the Christian communities he founded and nurtured he tried again and again to make the teachings of Jesus apply to daily life in very practical ways. Read the passage below from Paul's letter to the Christians living in Rome 10-15 years after Christ's death and resurrection. Highlight, underline or circle the words and phrases you find meaningful or helpful.

Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. ¹⁰ Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. ¹¹ Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically, ¹² Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying. ¹³ When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality.

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them; pray that God will bless them. ¹⁵ Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all!

¹⁷ Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. ¹⁸ Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.



¹⁹ Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say,

“I will take revenge;
I will pay them back,”
says the LORD.

²⁰ Instead,

“If your enemies are hungry, feed them.

If they are thirsty, give them something to drink.

In doing this, you will heap

burning coals of shame on their heads.”

²¹ Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good.

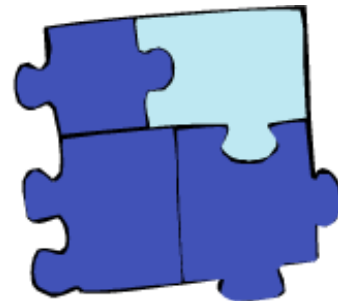
Lord this week help me to _____

Closing Prayer

Loving God, my second corner is my friends, and for them I am thankful. They are my spirit mirrors. When I look within myself, I will find them. When I look to them, I will find myself. They will be there for me whenever I need them. They forgive me when I have done wrong and give me strength when I feel weak or am afraid. In them I trust. Help me to be for them all that they are to me. Let me be a beacon of trust, compassion, and love for the people who are most important to me.

Session 3: My Inner Life

The third corner of your puzzle is spirituality. Spirituality is learning how the Holy Spirit stirs in each of us—in our prayers, in our hopes, in our fears, in the peaks and the pits of our lives. We are not always aware of our spirituality, though it is always there. It is a unique piece in your puzzle in that it is both within you and outside of you.



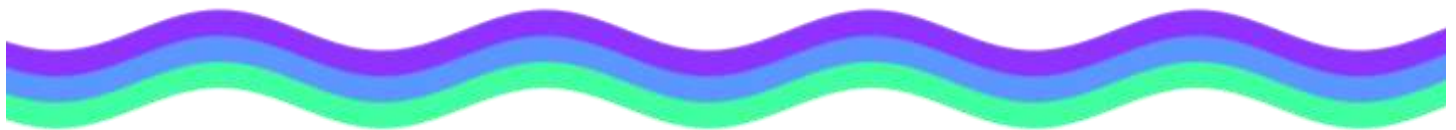
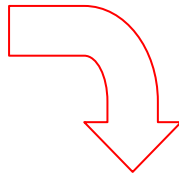
Identifying Your Spirit

Your spirit is what is unique about you. Close your eyes for a few moments and try to imagine your spirit. Try to think of your spirit by stepping outside yourself and looking inward.

Create a Spirit doodle Pay attention to colors, shapes, images and sounds that enter your mind when you think about yourself. Let your mind's eye seek out the personality of your spirit. Maybe incorporate a favorite quote or scripture verse. Below are some examples



My Spirit doodle



Describe your spirit - Use the following questionnaire to identify the character of your spirit.

Favorite Food _____

Favorite Color _____

Favorite Sport _____

Favorite Music/Song _____

Favorite Book _____

Favorite Subject _____

Clothing Style _____

Pets _____

Hobbies _____

Favorite Animal _____

Dream Job _____

Biggest Hope _____

Worst Fear _____

Happiest Sound _____

Saddest Moment _____

Complete these sentences...

My spirit is like... _____


I used to be _____, but
now I'm _____.

My spirit brings me closer to God when... _____

Spiritual Experiences

Think of an experience that you often remember and reflect on, or an experience that you know changed you—a move, an

Bernard of Clairvaux

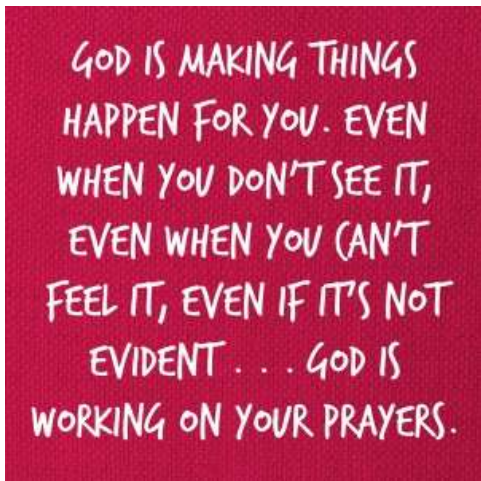


Spiritual life is like living water that springs up from the very depths of our own spiritual experience. In spiritual life everyone has to drink from his or her own well.

accomplishment, a death,
a challenge, an injury/illness,
a success, a friendship...

What was your life like before that experience? _____

What was your life like after that experience? _____



What did you lose? _____

What did you gain? _____

How did the experience affect your direction in life? _____

Do you like the direction in which you're going? If yes why? If no why? _____

GOD SIGHTINGS

A God sighting is a time when you see God working. You see God doing really cool things. Remember as Catholics we believe in the [principle of sacramentality](#) which says all people, things, feeling, experiences, places and events are potentially or in fact the bearer of God's presence and the instrument of God's saving activity on our behalf. This means that God is always working for us (think back to Matthew Kelly's reflection [God's Dream for You](#). Maybe you want to go back and listen to that reflection again or re-read the comments you wrote earlier.

Guided Meditation 3 - Receiving God's unconditional LOVE & HEALING!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jdOzTaRW1y8>

Remember to find a quiet place to do your meditation. You can close your eyes and listen or listen while watching the slides. This meditation is about 22 minutes long so make sure you have the time.

What thoughts came to your mind during the meditation? _____



What feelings arose in you during this meditation?

Where in your life do you need God's love? _____

Tell God what He can do for you right now, in this moment? _____

Prayer – The Lorica of St. Patrick

Lorica, in Latin, means breastplate and refers to ancient armor worn to protect the chest. In the Celtic Christian tradition a **lorica** is a prayer recited for protection in which the petitioner invokes all the power of God as a safeguard against evil in its many forms.



The **Deer's Cry** or **Faed Fiada** in Irish is the most famous of the loricas, but there are others. You might even consider writing your own lorica – it need not be long.

Read this prayer slowly two or three times. This is just one of many translations of this famous and ancient prayer. It has been put to music by many artists. Listen to this rendition by Shaun Davey & Rita Connolly @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DONuyLwWPaY> and hear in it the strength and confidence of Patrick's prayer. Think about downloading the MP3 file on your phone for those times when you are in need of God's help.

As I arise today,
may the strength of God pilot me,
the power of God uphold me,
the wisdom of God guide me.
May the eye of God look before me,
the ear of God hear me,
the word of God speak for me.
May the hand of God protect me,
the way of God lie before me,
the shield of God defend me,
the host of God save me.
May Christ shield me today.

Christ with me, Christ before me,
Christ behind me,
Christ in me, Christ beneath me,
Christ above me,
Christ on my right, Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit,
Christ when I stand,
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.

Amen

Session 4 – God's Invitation to you

Listen to Matthew Kelly's reflection "**Everything's Connected**" @ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r_3KD1YxVLg

To choose to be confirmed means to say to God and his Church *"I'm all in! You can count on me to be there for the long haul."*

OR

"The Mass never ends. We go forth in peace to love and serve the Lord and each other. Thanks be to God."

It sounds great till you face the facts

- 80% of those who are confirmed leave the Church within seven years of receiving the sacrament
- The largest Christian denomination in the U.S. are Roman Catholics. If we counted them as a denomination the second largest group would be those who used to be Catholics

That tells us a few things

- Lots of people who receive the sacrament of Confirmation don't get it
- Going forth in peace to love and serve the Lord and each other is incredibly hard
- Discipleship is a marathon not a sprint



As Matthew Kelly says, God wants to have a dynamic collaboration with humanity – God wants a dynamic relationship characterized by collaboration with **you**. Think about that – God doesn't need you God wants you!

I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you."

Jeremiah 31:3

pause & reflect

Does knowing that change the way you think about Confirmation? _____

Who do you know/see who you believe are in dynamic relationship with God? Who take seriously their role as dynamic collaborators with God? _____

How have these individuals influenced you? _____

When we think of Baptism we think of water;

When we think of Confirmation we think of fire

"As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

Matthew 3:11

Guided Meditation 4 – Watch this scriptural meditation on Pentecost – the Descent of the Holy Spirit

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Nx-OSAul9k>

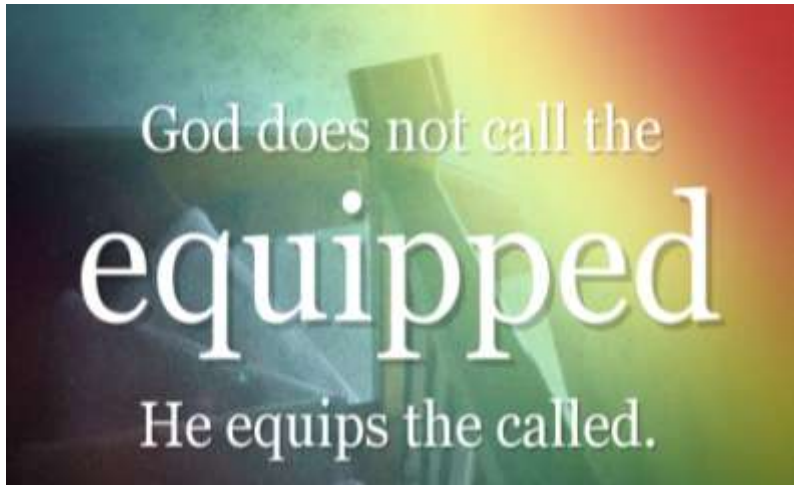
What do think the 'gift of the Holy Spirit' is?

Write whatever words or draw whatever images come to your mind

Catherine of Sienna said, ***“Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire.”***

Matthew Kelly spoke of each of us having a unique mission as collaborators of God.

What do you think God is asking of you at this point in your life? _____



The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

1. Knowledge
2. Understanding
3. Wisdom
4. Courage/Fortitude
5. Right Judgment/Counsel
6. Reverence/Piety
7. Wonder & Awe in God's presence/
Fear of the Lord

One of the ways God equips us to be disciples is by sending to us in the sacrament of Confirmation the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Helps us distinguish between truth & falsehood, fact & fiction, the real & imagined.

Seeing with the eyes of faith – wanting to see things as God does

also called **piety** – a deep sense of love that leads us to deliberately seek out ways to please God

also called **fear of the Lord** – the ability to perceive just how holy, powerful, wise, beautiful and almighty God is

Seeing reality and knowing with the heart; its focus is on seeing the relationship between things

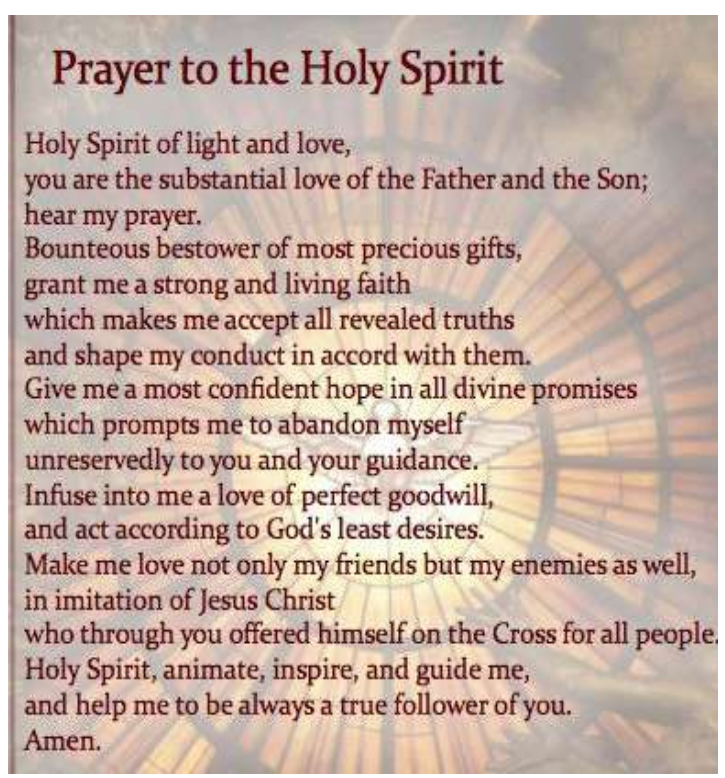
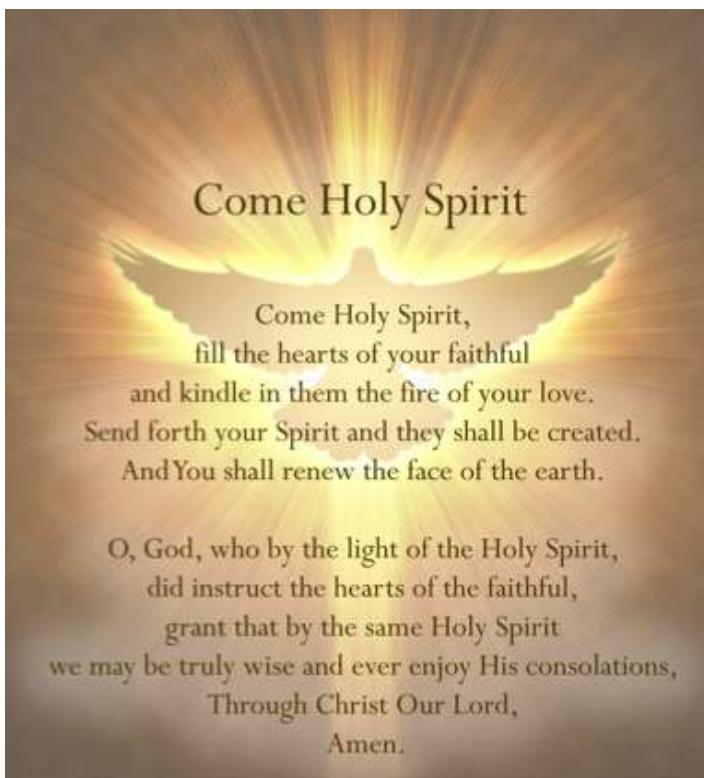
also called **fortitude** - combines bravery & endurance, helps us face danger, stand up for what is right & act accordingly

Also called **counsel** – the ability to look at a situation, discern what is the correct thing to do & have the courage to do it

As reflect on the meaning of the gifts of the Spirit which one or two are you most in need of at this point in your life? _____

Share one example from your own life and show how any of the gifts of the Spirit might have made difference in that experience _____

FINAL PRAYER – read both of the prayers below, which do you like better? Which speaks to your situation? Choose the one that fits you best and say it often as you continue your preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation.





You have taken an **intentional** time away to **experience** a new awareness of the presence of God. You have reached out and taken **an opportunity** to explore

- **Where you are right now in your life**
- **Where you have been**
- **Where you want to go as you continue your journey towards Confirmation**

We hope that doing so has allowed you

- **to see things with fresh eyes**
- **put things into perspective**
- **brought you closer to God who loves you unconditionally**

We hope the time you have spent in retreat has allowed you to see **how life & faith connect for you**, in this moment of your life.

The last step

All private retreats include meeting with a Retreat Master or Spiritual Director. This helps the retreatant recap the retreat experience, reviewing the important insights they are taking away from the retreat.

The last step in this online retreat is for you to set up a meeting with **Fr. Terry**, **Mel Tomal** or **Dr. Peg** and share with them the insights you have gained, the questions that might have surfaced, and how you now view the journey you are on towards Confirmation. To set up a time to meet email

- Fr. Terry at tkeehan@holymfamilyparish.org
- Mel Tomal at mtomal@holymfamilyparish.org
- Peg Hanrahan at phanrahan@holymfamilyparish.org

Bring your completed packet with you for that meeting. Plan on spending 45-60 minutes with your retreat master.

Acknowledgements

We give special thanks for the work of many who have graciously shared the fruit of their labors with the larger Catholic community via the internet.

- The online retreat **Life is a Puzzle: A Pieceful Retreat for Teens** (*Good Ground Press*) the work of The Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet which provided the template and some very helpful content for designing this retreat.
- The work of Matthew Kelly, in particular the **Decision Point Confirmation Program** published by Dynamic Catholic. His presentations available on YouTube provided the witness talks so important on teen retreats.
- The Honest Guys who provide free high quality guided meditations via YouTube - <https://www.youtube.com/user/TheHonestGuys>
- The work of Emma Noelle, in particular her Guided Meditation: Receiving God's unconditional LOVE & HEALING! For more information on Emma Noelle's YouTube channel see <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC7tDECHPppyMtaYzkqjD2qQ>
- Janice Marturano's concept of Purposeful Pauses – The Institute for Mindful Leadership <https://instituteformindfulleadership.org/about-the-institute>
- Carole King and James Taylor composer and performer of You've Got A Friend
- Shaun Davey & Rita Connolly's rendition of **the Deer's Cry**
- The images used throughout made available on the World Wide Web
- The vast treasury of the words and prayers of the saints available in many formats
- The support and encouragement of Fr. Terry Keehan, Pastor, Holy Family Catholic Community