

CONFIRMATION PROGRAM HANDBOOK

Wednesdays at 7pm
Moylan Hall/Church

Questions?

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Our Lady of the Assumption

Updated for Fall 2024

OLA Confirmation Preparation Program

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Dear Confirmation Candidates and Parents:

We are looking forward to your teen taking this next step in his or her spiritual journey by preparing to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation! With this sacrament, they choose to be fully received into the Church; to confirm the promises made by their parents and their godparents at Baptism.

We are excited about our program and hope you and your teen will be too. A team of teen and adult leaders work hard each year to develop our program and lead your teen into a deeper faith that will transform their hearts and change their lives.

Your first step is to review the calendar so that you understand the time commitment involved for our program. Make sure to note the date of each session in the Fall, our retreat, and our **Parent/Teen Orientation on April 28th**. This orientation is our one commitment for the Spring, and attendance is vital to ensure that you and your teen know what's expected. It's important to remember that in order to be eligible for Confirmation your child must have 2 years of Catholic Faith Formation through OLA's Edge with Purpose program (and he or she must have attended at least 80% of the sessions in 7th and 8th grade), another parish's Faith Formation/Religious Ed program, through attendance at a Catholic school in 7th and 8th grade, or a combination of these. *If your child does not meet this prerequisite but would like to be receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, please contact us as soon as possible so we can discuss options.*

If your child will not be in 10th grade (or above) this coming Fall, does not intend to be confirmed next year, or was not enrolled in a Catholic education program last year (such as OLA's Edge program or enrollment at a Catholic school), please let me know so we can update our records accordingly.

Parishioner registrations must be done online and are due on **April 15th**; we will not know about availability for non-parishioners until that time. The early bird registration fee of \$130 is available through **March 25th**. After this, the fee will be \$160. If we are able to take late registrations, a late fee will be added.

Confirmation Mass will be celebrated on **Monday, November 4th at 6pm** by Archbishop Hartmayer! There will be a reception after to honor the newly Confirmed and their families.

Please read through the Confirmation Handbook for more details on the program and our expectations of Confirmation Candidates. Also, please be sure to mark the dates on your calendar immediately to ensure that your child can attend all the sessions. **It is important for you to remember, as you place these dates on your calendar, that attendance at ALL sessions (and the retreat) is mandatory in order for your child to receive the Sacrament. Athletics and school activities are not considered excused absences.**

We look forward to this journey together!

Yours in Jesus and Mary,

Rev. James D. Duffy, S.M.
Pastor

Andrew Knuckles
Director of Youth Ministry

Introduction to Confirmation Preparation

Archdiocesan Guidelines

Confirmation is a very exciting time in the faith journey of a Catholic. The Archdiocese guidelines are as follows:

The free-standing, parish-conducted Confirmation formation program must be distinguished from the ordinarily required two year prerequisite foundational religious education program... the parish Confirmation formation program should occur independently from the on-going religious education program. The parish Confirmation formation program should also be of brief duration and intensely focused on the nature, effects, gifts, and fruits of the Sacrament of Confirmation as they are discussed in the Catechism.

*The candidate has the right to make the decision about readiness to receive this Sacrament... The Sacrament of Confirmation is sometimes called the Sacrament of Christian maturity, even though biological age is not necessarily an indicator of receptivity to the Sacrament, (Catechism no. 1308).**

OLA's Confirmation Preparation Program

In keeping with Archdiocesan guidelines, youth ordinarily should have attended a Catholic school or a parish faith formation program for at least two years before enrollment in the free-standing parish Confirmation formation program. At OLA, we expect those who wish to be Confirmed in 10th grade to have attended a Catholic school or OLA's Edge program for 7th and 8th grades. *As we do not want to impede a candidate from receiving the sacrament, an exception to this policy may be made in such circumstances as the Pastor deems appropriate. Please contact the Director of Youth Ministry.*

Our program spans roughly two months and meets for seven sessions once a week on Wednesday evenings. We also have a mandatory one-day retreat on **Saturday, September 28th** which is only available to those in the program.

**If a prospective Candidate does not wish to receive the sacrament, we encourage them to discuss it with their parents and with our Director of Youth Ministry and/or Pastor.*

Foundation Preparation (7th and 8th Grade)

In order to participate in the Confirmation preparation program in the fall of their 10th grade year, a candidate needs to have actively participated in religious formation in 7th and 8th grade by:

- Participation and completion of 80% of Edge with Purpose sessions at OLA during the 7th and 8th grade year.
- Participation and completion of 80% of another parish's faith formation program.
- Attendance at a Catholic school in 7th and 8th grade

A combination of the two would also fulfill the requirements.

Specific Confirmation Preparation (10th Grade)

All candidates, **regardless of where they attend high school**, are expected to complete all components of the 10th grade preparation program:

- Register for the Confirmation Preparation Program during the spring semester of their 9th grade year. Part of the registration process requires verification of reception of Baptism and First Communion:
 - If one or both of the sacraments were received at a parish other than Our Lady of the Assumption, we **MUST** have a copy of the applicable sacrament certificate(s)
 - If one or both of the sacraments were celebrated at OLA, we will verify that information. We will contact you with any questions.
- Attend the Confirmation Candidate and Parent Orientation Meeting on **Sunday, April 28th** at 12:30 PM in Moylan Hall.
- Completion and submission of Sponsor Form by **Wednesday, August 28th**.
- Completion and submission of Saint Name Form by **Wednesday, August 28th**.
- Completion of 3 hours of service between the Confirmation Orientation and **Wednesday, August 28th**.
- Participation in all Confirmation Preparation sessions and the rehearsal.
- Participation in the one-day Confirmation Retreat, which will take place at Life Teen Camp Hidden Lake on **Saturday, September 28th** over the course of the entire day.

We understand the secular demands placed on the youth and their families. In order to provide you with the opportunity to make these events a priority for you and your candidate we ask that you add the dates for the program to your family calendar now. *For the specific dates for the year, see Appendix 1 – This Year’s Calendar.*

Registration Information

Confirmation Preparation Registration is for rising 10th graders. Registration is online only. ***Late registrations will not be accepted except in extenuating circumstances, such as recently moving to Atlanta.*** Registration is not considered complete until all sacramental information is received in the office.

As the program continues to grow and we approach a full capacity number, priority will go to registered parishioners. Non-parishioners are not able to register until the Parishioner Registration Due Date has passed. Non-Parishioners who wish to register for our program must contact Gretchen Heath to do so (gheath@olachurch.org, 404.261.7181 Extension 123). While we have typically had space in the past for non-parishioners to journey with us, there is no guarantee that will be the case.

The Confirmation registration fee covers the cost of all supplies, meals, retreat, and other necessary items for the program. There is an early bird registration fee available. Registration is not complete until the registration form, the sacramental paperwork (if applicable) is received, and the registration fee is paid.

As a part of our registration form, you will be asked to complete three permission forms online for your child:

1. OLA Annual Medical Release

The medical form allows adult leaders of OLA to attain medical aid for your child in case of an emergency. It also provides emergency contact numbers for your child.

2. OLA Annual Media Release Form

This form was developed by the Archdiocese to include consistent, specific language to cover all varieties of media, and has been reviewed by the Archdiocese of Atlanta's outside council. This allows OLA to share pictures and videos from events in the bulletin, online, etc.

3. Archdiocese of Atlanta Permission to Contact Youth

This form is to be used for contacting youth via media. This gives employees and adult volunteers permission to add your child's email to the distribution list, respond to their emails, reply to comments on social media, etc. *Parents will always be provided with the same communications as their children, but it may come through different technology (for example: parents will receive an email, kids may receive a Remind notification).*

If you have any questions, please contact Andrew Knuckles at aknuckles@olachurch.org.

General Confirmation Important Dates Overview

For the specific dates for the year, see Appendix 1 – This Year's Calendar, located at the end of the handbook.

April 15th – Last Day of Registration

April 28th – Parent and Teen Orientation Meeting. Mandatory for all Confirmation candidates and at least 1 parent.

September 28th - Confirmation Retreat (all day at Life Teen Camp Hidden Lake; see calendar for Address)

Wednesdays in the Fall (August 28th – October 9th)- Wednesday evening sessions from 7pm to 8:30pm (doors open/pizza served at 6:30)

Monday, November 4th– Confirmation Mass @ 6pm

For each Wednesday session, there will be a pizza dinner at 6:30 PM. Please RSVP to the Director of Youth Ministry by 12 PM on Wednesday to make sure we order enough pizza. Cost for dinner is covered in our registration fee.

Attendance Policy

Since we have a condensed program, attendance at all sessions is MANDATORY to be confirmed. One excused absence may be allowed for each teen depending on the circumstance and must be approved by the Director of Youth Ministry *at least 2 days in advance of the missed session*.

Your one excused absence cannot be used to miss our retreat. If you cannot attend our retreat, you must register for a retreat at another parish.

In the past, excused absences have been granted for regional or state level athletic competitions, funerals, and drama productions. ***Excused absences will not be given for practices, rehearsals, lots of homework, or to study for tests.*** Please be sure to put our dates on your calendar well in advance so that you can plan accordingly.

Please do not send your child to Confirmation Prep if they are sick. We will work with you to ensure that illness does not put your teen at risk of not receiving the Sacrament.

Primary Communication

Communication from OLA during the Confirmation Preparation Program will come via email from Andrew Knuckles at aknuckles@olachurch.org. Once sessions begin, there will be a weekly email that includes a recap of the meeting, upcoming service opportunities, resources, and announcements. Additional forms of communication may be used, but will be announced via email.

Communications concerning the collection of Paperwork will come from Gretchen Heath, particularly as it relates to any ***overdue*** items. You can reach Gretchen at gheath@olachurch.org.

All of the forms and information for Confirmation families can be found on the Confirmation page of the OLA website: <https://www.olachurch.org/confirmation>.

Sponsor Information and Form

Role of the Parents and Sponsors

Parents and sponsors of the candidates should understand the history and liturgy of the sacrament of Confirmation and its meaning for Christian living. They are the most significant witnesses of “confirmed Catholicism” in the life of a candidate. They should be involved with the candidate in preparation for the sacrament. This may take the form of discussions about topics covered at Confirmation Prep, attending Mass together, praying together, and more.

There are many resources available for parents and sponsors. Please contact the Director of Youth Ministry (Andrew Knuckles, aknuckles@olachurch.org) if you would like a list of reliable sources for parents and sponsors.

What is a sponsor?

A teen's sponsor should be someone with whom they share their faith. It should be someone who has guided, or will help guide them, in their faith journey - both in their words and in their actions.

- A sponsor at Confirmation witnesses the commitment to Christ which you are making
- Your sponsor presents you to the (Arch)bishop and stands with you as he anoints you with the chrism
- The baptismal sponsor (godparent) is recommended as this shows the unity between the two sacraments; choose your sponsor carefully

Sponsor Requirements

- Your sponsor must be a Baptized and Confirmed Catholic, at least 16 years old
- Your sponsor must be registered in a parish and actively participate in the life of the Church. This includes participation in Sunday Mass and giving witness to their faith by receiving Jesus in Holy Communion.
- If married, your sponsor's marriage must have been witnessed in the Catholic Church by a priest or deacon.
- The revised code of Canon Law states that parents cannot be sponsors; **however, if the sponsor is unable to travel to be at Mass, parents may stand in as a proxy so long as the parish is informed ahead of time.**

Sponsor Verification Form

We require that your sponsor complete the Verification Form. Please pay careful attention to the following categories and make sure the form is appropriately completed:

If your sponsor is a parishioner at Our Lady of the Assumption:

The sponsor must fill out the form and sign it. They do not need the signature to be witnessed by a member of staff or receive the parish seal on the document. However, the form **MUST** have their signature. ***If your sponsor is an OLA parishioner, you may scan and email the form to us.***

If your sponsor is NOT a parishioner at Our Lady of the Assumption:

The sponsor must fill out the form and have it witnessed by a staff member of their parish - this requires the parish seal. This can take a while if the staff or pastor is out of town so it is never too early to go ahead and get this done!!! ***We must have the original form; no electronic or scanned copies will be accepted since parish seals are typically not legible in this format. Please mail the form.***

Sponsor Verification Forms must be turned in by the published due date. They can be turned in at one of our sessions or mailed to the parish office (Attn: Gretchen Heath | 1406 Hearst Drive NE | Brookhaven, GA 30319). Please email Gretchen Heath at gheath@olachurch.org if you have any questions.

Confirmation Saint

Confirmation Saint/Saint Name

When you stand before the (arch)bishop at your Confirmation, your sponsor will tell him the saint name that you have chosen. He will then anoint you with the chrism and confirm you with your new name.

Choosing your Confirmation Saint name is a very important part of the Confirmation process. This Saint should be someone who inspires you, someone you identify with, and most importantly, someone who can be a role model for you in your Catholic faith.

The saints lived on this earth and experienced suffering, joy, pain, broken promises, peace, frustration, war, injury, heartbreak... in a way, they are not too different from us. What sets them apart, however, they know what it takes to be united with God here on this messy earth. They know what it takes to live well for Him. And they chose to love Him above anything else.

You should choose a canonized Catholic Saint as your Confirmation name. Choose someone who inspires you to live out your Catholic faith. Throughout the Confirmation program, you will be sharing about your saint's and their story with your small group, so be prepared to learn more about your saint leading up to Confirmation!

Need some inspiration? First, pray about it and then check out the following links:

- <https://lifeteen.com/blog/biggest-best-list-confirmation-saints-guys-girls/>
- <https://lifeteen.com/blog/why-do-catholics-choose-confirmation-saints/>
- <http://www.catholic.org/saints>
- <http://catholicsaints.info/>

Also, check out this book that may help: <https://shop.lifeteen.com/products/100-saints-every-catholic-teen-should-know>

Saint Name Form

After you have chosen your Confirmation Saint, fill out the Saint Name Form! Please note that we no longer use a physical form for this; we have an online form, which can be found at olachurch.org/confirmation.

On the form, you will be asked to include an identifying title for your chosen saint. *This is very important as some saint names are not specific enough (e.g. St. John—The Baptist? The Apostle? Newman?).*

Service Hours

Service hours are an important component of Confirmation preparation. This sacrament is about making the faith your own, and that includes going out into the world and living it.

We ask for three hours of service: it can be three one hour projects or one three hour project, however you want to do this. You cannot use the same hours for school that you use for Confirmation. Confirmation only happens once in a lifetime so we hope that you'll use this opportunity to give back to the community and to answer Jesus' call to serve others!

Any hours of service performed starting after the date of Confirmation Orientation will be accepted. The OLA Service Hours Form must be completed and turned in by the published due date; please note that this is an online form as well, which can be found at olachurch.org/confirmation. *Please do not use service hour forms from other organizations or your school.*

Common FAQs About Confirmation

Why is Confirmation Mass on a weeknight?

The Archdiocese of Atlanta asks parishes located within the perimeter to choose a weeknight for their Confirmation. Since we're inside I-285, we comply with the Archbishop's Office's request.

What if my sponsor cannot attend Mass?

We understand that many of our teens may choose sponsors who live out-of-state or even outside the United States. If a sponsor cannot attend Confirmation Mass, a parent may stand in as a "proxy". We simply ask that we are made aware of the situation well in advance via email. Please email gheath@olachurch.org.

Does my sponsor need to attend our sessions?

No. We understand that some sponsors will be coming in from out of town and it's not feasible for them to come each week. Others may not have Wednesday nights free. As such, our sessions are designed for teens and the leadership team.

Wednesday Nights are difficult for my teen's schedule. Can you offer a different time or can they take an online course?

Due to the community that is built during our time together, online work cannot replace this. In addition, we unfortunately do not have the resources (volunteers, space, etc.) to offer this program at an additional time. If your child cannot make our program work, the Pastor would be more than happy to write a letter for them to attend another parish's program.

Why is there a service requirement?

Service hours are a component of Confirmation preparation. This sacrament is about making the faith your own, and that includes going out into the world and living it.

We ask for three hours of service: it can be three one hour projects, or one three hour project, however you want to do this. You cannot use the same hours for school that you use for

Confirmation. Confirmation only happens once in a lifetime so we hope that you'll use this opportunity to give back to the community and to answer Jesus' call to serve others!

Any hours of service performed after our Confirmation Orientation will be accepted. The Service Hours Form must be completed and turned in by the published due date. Upcoming service opportunities are often included in the weekly email in the fall.

My Confirmation Sponsor lives in another country. Do I have to have an original Sponsor Verification Form or can I email it to OLA?

Sorry, no electronic copies of the Sponsor Verification Form will be accepted. We must have an original so be sure to get the form to your sponsor as soon as possible so they can have it filled out and mailed back! Questions about the form should be directed to Gretchen Heath at gheath@olachurch.org.

How will I receive information about Confirmation Preparation?

Once registration closes, we will create an email list and will communicate via parents and Confirmation candidates that way. Please make sure any email addresses listed on your registration are ones that are checked regularly.

I have a sports practice on Wednesday afternoon/evenings that my coach says is mandatory. What should I do?

Confirmation sessions are also mandatory. Since we have a condensed program that only meets once a week, Confirmation candidates need to be at all meetings. Please talk to your coach and explain the mandatory attendance policy. In the past, every school has been accommodating towards any of their students who want to receive the sacrament. If you need a note, the Director of Youth Ministry or Pastor will be happy to provide one.

Contact Information

Any questions about Confirmation Preparation sessions, Confirmation Mass, or retreat should be directed to:

Andrew Knuckles
Director of Youth Ministry
aknuckles@olachurch.org
404.261.7181 Extension 113

Questions about **paperwork and registration** should be directed to:

Gretchen Heath
Religious Education Secretary
gheath@olachurch.org
404.261.7181 Extension 123

Appendix 1 – This Year’s Calendar

Confirmation Program 2024 Calendar

Date	Event
Sunday, April 28	Parent and Teen Orientation, 12:30 PM, Moylan Hall <i>Every registered teen will need to attend with a parent.</i>
Wednesday, August 28* Wednesday, September 4 Wednesday, September 11 Wednesday, September 18 Wednesday, September 25	Preparation Sessions, 7-8:30 PM in Moylan Hall <i>Pizza dinner served at 6:30 PM, Please RSVP before 12 PM the day of.</i>
Saturday, September 28	Confirmation Retreat ALL DAY @ Camp Hidden Lake 830 Hidden Lake Rd Dahlonega, GA 30533 <i>Drop-off/check-in begin at 7:30 AM at OLA. Bus departs at 8am and arrives back at 9:30pm.</i> <i>Saturday Vigil Mass will be celebrated on the retreat.</i>
Wednesday, October 2 Wednesday, October 9	Preparation Sessions, 7-8:30 PM in Moylan Hall <i>Pizza dinner served at 6:30 PM, Please RSVP before 12 PM the day of.</i>
Wednesday, October 30	Confirmation Mass Rehearsal, 7 PM Either the sponsor or a parent should attend with the Confirmation Candidate.
Monday, November 4	Confirmation Mass, 6 PM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Confirmation Candidates & Sponsors will need to arrive at 5:15 PM in Marist Hall (OLA School Cafeteria) for a meeting beforehand.</i>

***Important Due Dates:**

Sponsor Form – August 28

Saint Name Form – August 28

Service Hours – August 28