

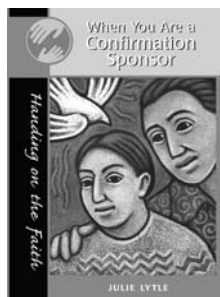
*HANDING ON THE FAITH*

**FORMING  
CONFIRMATION  
SPONSORS**



**LEADER'S GUIDE**

**PLEASE NOTE:** This leader's guide was originally written for those using this video program in its VHS format. Those now using this program on DVD may find some references that do not apply to their use (i.e., directions for locating segments, time notations, etc.). We trust that both VHS- and DVD-users will find this guide a valuable resource.



This program is a video companion to the booklet

*Handing on the Faith: When You Are a Confirmation Sponsor* (B16438) by Julie Lytle. Both are produced by St. Anthony Messenger Press and can be ordered by calling 1-800-488-0488.

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## **Catholic Update Video**

### **The Use of Video in Faith Formation**

Jesus used the “media” of his day to teach. He was a master storyteller. His preaching is full of imagery. His parables are calculated to engage his audience. Through the ages, Christian teachers and preachers have followed Jesus in the creative proclamation of his message.

From the culture of Jesus’ time, heavily dependent on *oral communication*—to the advent of *print communication*—to our own time and its dependence on *electronic media*—Christian teachers have adapted their proclamation to each new medium and its particular demands.

Media scholars like Marshall McLuhan remind us of the impact of the medium on the message it carries. *How* we communicate affects *what* we communicate. Electronic media offer us new ways to tell the story of our faith. Father Pierre Babin points out (see *The New Era in Religious Communications*, Pierre Babin with Mercedes Iannone, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1991) that the message, as well as the sender and receiver, all will be re-shaped in the telling.

Catechesis, as a part of the total evangelization process, must touch the learners’ hearts and shine the light of faith on their lives. It must connect to the learners’ experience or risk being discarded as irrelevant. To be effective, catechists must learn how to make the best use of the electronic media available in our culture, aware of the particular medium’s strengths and weaknesses.

Video is a very popular, familiar and accessible part of our electronic culture. It draws us in, captures our imaginations and touches us on a deep, emotional level.

As it speaks to our experience and utilizes several of our senses, its message is more likely to be heard and remembered. By integrating quality video programs into the catechetical process, catechists can share the message more effectively.

At the same time, as television becomes a more pervasive part of our lives, we can be lulled into thinking that it can do everything for us—inform, entertain, shop, even worship. The reality is that it can't and shouldn't do everything. As Pierre Babin emphasizes, electronic media function differently than print media. They appeal first to the *emotional* content of our faith rather than the *intellectual* content. Video cannot begin to convey the amount of information print can. It cannot replace the live presence and personal witness of the catechist. But in a catechetical setting, it can be a powerful part of the “mix of media” used in proclaiming the message.

How effectively video—or any electronic media—is used in the catechetical setting depends primarily on how prepared the catechist is to use it:

- A preview of the video is essential to determine the best use of the program with a particular group.
- The catechist should select a video program (or section of a video) based on the audience, the purpose, and the availability of competent teachers and other resources and activities to support the theme.
- Sufficient time should be available to introduce the video and to process the viewing experience.

Catechists must realize that they control the use of video in their sessions. They might approach a video program in one of two ways: as a skeleton on which to build a presentation or as a way to “enflesh” an existing skeleton.

A video program well-tailored to the needs of a

group might be used in its entirety. At other times, catechists may creatively manipulate the video to fit their needs:

- An excerpt may be taken from a longer piece to illustrate a point.
- A video may be shown with the *sound off* to highlight an aspect of the program.
- The “pause” button can be used freely to interject explanations and examples or to elicit reactions.
- The program or excerpt may be repeated to emphasize a point.

The producers of this video program have attempted to craft both medium and message with an awareness of the power of the medium as well as its limitations. They encourage those who use it to study this guide and become familiar with ways to allow this program to supplement their own sharing of the Gospel message of Jesus Christ.

### **Introduction to the Series**

*Catholic Update Video* is a video resource designed for use in the RCIA, catechist formation, sacrament programs for parents, faith-sharing groups, study groups, ministry training and high school religious education. *Catholic Update Video* draws from Catholic life and practice to present a single topic in a “video toolbox” format with four distinct segments—story, witness, teaching and musical reflection.

*Catholic Update Video* has been designed with today’s learner in mind. Its segments are short and can stand alone or be used with others in the program. The format is flexible, making it useful in a variety of group settings as well as for individual viewing. The emphasis is on what video can do best, namely touch us through story (story segment), testimony (witness segment) and

song (musical reflection segment) with images and the emotions they carry. But a more “didactic” approach (teaching segment) respects the need to convey a concise core of information.

The general model for catechetical process (life experience, message or doctrine, response) is respected by the order of the four segments, although at times a catechist may choose to use them alone or out of sequence:

- Each program begins with a **story segment** designed to draw viewers in and help them connect their life experience to the faith topic.
- The testimony of real-life Catholics in the **witness segment** helps viewers reflect on their own life experience and prepare for group sharing.
- Our teacher briefly highlights some aspects of the topic in the **teaching segment**. Relevant images help to illustrate the points being made. (*This segment is not intended to treat a topic exhaustively nor substitute for a more thorough presentation on the message or doctrine.*)
- Viewers are invited to respond in prayer using the **musical reflection segment**.

The program’s host provides a context for each segment. This is designed to help viewers who will see the program from beginning to end. Catechists who use segments individually or out of sequence may wish to prepare their own lead-in. On-screen graphics provide viewers with a question for reflection or sharing between segments.

This leader’s guide is an important tool for making the best use of this video program. It includes the following features.

- **Small Group Process** incorporating all four segments in a single session.

- **Summary and Suggestions for Use** for each segment.
- **Questions for Sharing** for the story, witness and teaching segments; facilitators can choose from them or use them as models for developing their own questions.
- **Suggestions for Use** for the musical reflection segment provide suggestions for using this segment in a prayer setting.
- **Resources for Further Study** are listed at the end of this guide.
- Approximate times are noted for where each segment begins. *(If the VCR is equipped with an “elapsed time” counter, reset the counter to 0:00:00 at the beginning of the tape and fast-forward to the time listed for the beginning of the desired segment. If the VCR does not have an “elapsed time” counter, the facilitator can fast-forward in the “review” mode [i.e., while the VCR is in “play”] to find the gray screen and Catholic Update Video logo that indicate the start of a segment.)*

**H A N D I N G   O N   T H E   F A I T H**  
**FORMING CONFIRMATION SPONSORS**

**Overview of the Program**

Those watching this program have been asked to be Confirmation sponsors. It may be a while since their own Confirmation and might be the first time they've been asked to share faith in a formal Church setting and role. They may feel uncertain, unsure of their role. It's important that they realize they are not alone and that many sponsors have questions: *What does the Church and parish require of me? What does my Confirmation candidate expect from me?* This program is designed to answer some of those questions.

The role of sponsor has a long tradition, and the responsibilities are defined by the Church. A sponsor sees that the confirmed person lives as a faithful witness to Christ and carries out the obligations that come with the sacrament. A sponsor must be a fully practicing Catholic, free to carry out that role and those responsibilities.

That expectation sounds imposing! But behind it is the simple fact that we want our Church to be a lively presence in the world, an authentic witness to Christ's love, to hope, to justice and peace. Sponsors have a concrete share in that mission.

The role of sponsor, when taken seriously, becomes more than just being present at the ceremony, going through the ritual, or buying an appropriate gift. It means offering the support and witness of one's own faith.

That level of sharing may make some a bit uncomfortable. Faith is personal and, in our contemporary world, talking about one's beliefs may not come easily. But a sponsor has a special

relationship with the Confirmation candidate. That's why he or she was chosen as sponsor! Sponsors can build on that relationship as they offer encouragement, support and personal witness.

Sponsors can take a risk and affirm their candidate's Christian identity by sharing honestly something of their own faith. And they don't have to be saints to do that! They need only be, like all of us, saints "in process"— persons with honest questions, fears and even mistakes along the way. A sponsor's own struggle with faith, their unique stories and experiences, will be the best gift to one's candidate.

This program offers sponsors a framework to help them share those stories. Four segments explore the role of Confirmation sponsor:

- *Story*: a "first-person" account by a fictional character, Ephraim, a teacher who met Jesus when he was "lost" in the Temple (Luke 2:41-52). He tells of introducing Jesus into the group of teachers, his future hopes for this extraordinary young man and how he himself is being changed as a result of their encounter.
- *Witness*: Confirmation sponsors share about their understanding of their role and how they fulfill it.
- *Teaching*: Julie Lytle, youth minister and catechist, shares key points about the role of Confirmation sponsor from her booklet *Handing on the Faith: When You Are a Confirmation Sponsor*.
- *Music Video*: Our program concludes with a *music video reflection*, a prayer invoking God's help for those serving as Confirmation sponsors.

## **Audience**

This program is intended for adults serving as sponsors of children and teen Confirmation candidates. It may

also be used with Confirmation sponsors of adults.  
*(Facilitators should note that while the teaching segment makes specific mention of teen candidates for Confirmation, the essential content of this segment and all others is applicable to sponsors of Confirmation candidates of any age.)*

### **Small Group Process**

While many groups may choose to use the segments in separate sessions, we provide here a sample outline for a small group process incorporating all four of the video segments into a single session. This outline is designed to help volunteer catechists/facilitators who may need assistance in planning group sessions and for those professionals who like to adapt a sample plan to meet their own needs.

### **Suggested Process**

#### ***1. Setting the Environment***

An analogy used within this video is that of a person deciding what to pack for a trip. A central table may be set with items that one might need for a spiritual journey (e.g., a small carry-on bag might be surrounded by a Bible, a candle, a cross pendant, etc.).

#### ***2. Gathering***

Invite participants to gather around the table for an opening prayer or song. Choose a song familiar to the participants on the theme of faith, community or discipleship. Use the following or similar opening prayer: *Loving God, we gather today with the desire to share our faith with young people who seek to know you better. We pray for your guidance as we offer direction and support to those we sponsor. As*

*we embark on this journey, help us all to grow in love for you and your Church. Amen.*

### **3. *Sharing My Story***

- Invite personal reflection and group sharing on the question “When has a young person challenged or inspired my faith?”
- Show the *story segment* and invite participants to name the ways that Ephraim helped Jesus on his journey toward faithful adulthood. Invite reflection and sharing on the ways Ephraim seems to be growing as a result of this experience.
- View the *witness segment* and ask participants to share about their own understanding and expectations of the role of Confirmation sponsor.

### **4. *Relating My Story to the Church’s Story***

Show the *teaching segment* and discuss the roles and qualities of Confirmation sponsors. Use discussion questions on page 20.

### **5. *Responding in Life and Faith***

Use the *musical reflection segment* as a closing prayer. (If time permits, consider using or modifying the sample prayer experience outlined on page 21 of this guide.)

## **Story Segment “The Teacher in the Temple”**

*(Begins approximately 5:46 into program.)*

### **Summary**

Ephraim, a teacher of Israel, shares his story of encountering the 12-year old Jesus in the Temple in Jerusalem (Luke 2:41-52). Ephraim is enthusiastic about his vocation as teacher and quite intrigued by this young man who shows much promise and wisdom.

The Passover feast was over. Those who had

traveled to Jerusalem for Passover had departed for their homes. The court of the Temple was quiet. Ephraim was on his way to join other teachers with whom he often met to discuss the fine points of the Torah.

Hurrying across the court, he saw an unusual sight. Near the place where the group of rabbis was gathered, was a young man. He was listening intently to their conversation.

Ephraim immediately noticed that there was something different about the boy. He was not distracted by the activity in the Temple area, and seemed to respect it as a house of prayer. Ephraim sensed that this young man knew where he was and what he was about.

As Ephraim walked closer, he noted the rough appearance of the boy's clothes and hands—marking him as the son of a craftsman, not a scholar like the young men who study with some of the scribes and lawyers.

Ephraim was moved to go up to the boy, introduce himself, and extend an invitation: “Would you like to join us and listen as we talk about God's law?” The boy responded enthusiastically and wondered if he might also ask some questions. Ephraim's colleagues were first hesitant, but then welcoming to the young man. Their love of sharing the joy of Torah quickly replaced their surprise, and they allowed him to sit with them.

Ephraim and the others were astonished when the boy began to ask his questions—not the kind of questions expected from such a young man. They showed much thought and reflection. Ephraim sensed that something was “coming to be” in this young man, that perhaps the hand of God had brought him there.

The young man's parents arrived. They had been frantically searching for him for days, having been

separated from him in the crowds leaving Jerusalem after the feast. His parents seemed both relieved and perplexed to find him in the Temple, seated among teachers of Israel. He expressed his own surprise that they hadn't known to find him in his "Father's house."

Ephraim wonders about the young man's response. While God is the Father of all, there was something about the way this young man said "my Father's house" that will not leave Ephraim alone.

The young man—Jesus was his name—and his parents left for their home in Nazareth. But before they left, Ephraim assured Jesus that he would always be welcome in the Temple and encouraged him to join their group of teachers again whenever he visited Jerusalem.

Ephraim concludes his story saying, "I believe that there is something about this young man that bears great promise. Perhaps he will have something to teach us all..."

### **Suggestions for Use**

Use this segment to invite participants to reflect and share about the experience of walking with others along the journey of faith. Can they see Ephraim as a model for their own role with their Confirmation candidate? Encourage them to first consider their own experiences of being "guided" or having another serve as a companion on the way. Follow this with reflection and sharing about how they are guides or companions for others. The following or similar questions may help viewers reflect and share.

### **Questions for Sharing**

1. What role did Ephraim play in this event in Jesus' life?
2. Why was Ephraim so moved by his encounter with the young Jesus?
3. When has a young person challenged or inspired your faith?
4. What similarities to the role of Confirmation sponsor do you see in what Ephraim did for Jesus?

### **Witness Segment**

*(Begins approximately 13:50 into program.)*

### **Summary**

Confirmation sponsors share about their understanding of their role and how they fulfill it. Key points from their sharing follow.

- I shared with my godson my experiences of Christ. I felt honored when he asked me to be his Confirmation sponsor. It told me that he sees me as a Christian role model.
- The role of a Confirmation sponsor is sharing faith, being supportive, being there for special times and being a friend.
- It's important that a young person has someone who is interested in them. The young person and their sponsor journey together to strengthen the faith of them both.
- I hope candidates gain their own sense of who they are in Christ.
- She sees that faith is something important in my life, that it affects my choices.
- I told him it was okay to have questions and doubts and to be unsure about where the Church fit

in his life. He's in a time of questioning, and I was there for him when he had questions.

- As we help them explore, we name what we believe. It's important to find ways to say "yes" to faith and know what we're talking about.
- She knows that I care about her and want to spend time with her. We talk about things that are important in her life. I listen to her. The openness we share allows me to lead her a little too.
- We've participated in Mass together and gone to dinner. She's come over and talked. I've shared about things that I'm involved in and what the Church means to me.
- One goal is that the young person becomes more involved in the community and that the community accepts them.
- By standing up with our candidates before the community and the bishop, we say that we support them in their faith and will journey with them in their life with Christ.
- Along with the honor of being a sponsor is a responsibility to live that life, saying "yes" to the Lord and being real about it. It's not just fluff or church code words but a part of who you are.

### **Suggestions for Use**

Use this segment to invite reflection and sharing about the expectations participants have for the relationship between sponsor and candidate. Focus here on the feelings and relationship. (*The teaching segment addresses the role and helpful attitudes of Confirmation sponsors and offers practical suggestions for fulfilling that role.*) Encourage participants to reflect on their own feelings and expectations as well as possible feelings and expectations of those they will sponsor.

The following or similar questions may help viewers reflect and share.

### **Questions for Sharing**

1. What is your understanding of the role of Confirmation sponsor?
2. What do you hope your candidate will gain from your relationship? your modeling?
3. How do/will you share your faith with the young person you are sponsoring?
4. How did you feel when you were asked to be a Confirmation sponsor?
5. What gifts do you bring to your role as Confirmation sponsor?

### **Teaching Segment**

*(Begins approximately 17:58 into program.)*

### **Summary**

Author Julie Lytle brings a wealth of experience to her presentation. She has been a Director of Family Religious Education, Director of Youth Ministries, Media Consultant, and an adjunct faculty member at Boston College's Institute for Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry. She has also served as a Confirmation sponsor herself, and written *Handing on the Faith: When You are a Confirmation Sponsor*, the booklet on which this teaching is based.

Julie compares preparing to serve as a Confirmation sponsor to deciding what to pack for a trip. Many sponsors are uncertain that they will have what they need and are often unclear about their role. She offers suggestions of what to pack for the shared journey of faith and some things to expect along the route.

**I. Sponsors help candidates share and explore faith experiences, practices and attitudes.**

- A. A sponsor's faith and experience of God are the most important items they carry.
- B. Sponsors must prepare well and trust in the support of the faith community and Holy Spirit.

**II. Tips and practical items for sponsors "to take on the journey."**

- A. Review your understanding of the Sacrament of Confirmation and learn how it's being presented to your candidate.
- B. Learn about the parish's preparation process and timeline.
- C. Take inventory of what you have to offer, what your candidate has and needs and other resources.
  - 1. Offer teens a safe space to share questions, issues and concerns.
  - 2. Pack acceptance, openness, honesty, integrity, encouragement, flexibility and patience.
  - 3. Adapt, yet remain a constant presence, to help teen candidates through instability and inconsistency.
- D. Focus on developing relationships—with your candidate, God, the Confirmation class and sponsors, the Christian community and the global community.
  - 1. Sponsors can help candidates "feel connected" and see how God is present in relationships.
  - 2. Stay "connected" with your candidate.
    - a. Agree on a regular schedule and ways of interacting.
    - b. Get together.
    - c. Use instant messaging, E-mail, "snail mail" and the telephone.
    - d. Ask about what interests your candidate (e.g., movies, music) and why.

- E. Encourage service and outreach opportunities.
- F. Pack prayers, Scripture, lives of the saints and documents of the Church.
- G. Be willing to learn with your candidate, listen, share and challenge.
- H. Invite your candidate to make a deeper Christian commitment.
- I. Share your own relationship with God and how it has changed and grown over time.

**III. Unlike a trip that comes to an end, the journey of faith is lifelong.**

- A. A sponsor's formal responsibilities end with the celebration of Confirmation, but the young person still needs mentoring and support.
- B. A sponsor's continued presence offers wisdom and a faith connection as a young person faces the challenges of adolescence and young adulthood.
- C. A sponsor can continue to be present by:
  1. Marking the anniversary of Confirmation.
  2. Introducing the young person to spiritual readings.
  3. Encouraging participation in a retreat.
  4. Acknowledging rites of passage.
  5. Encouraging belonging within the Church.
  6. Promoting service involvement.

**IV. Confirmation is about Christian discipleship—about living as followers of Jesus and believing that God is present within and among us.**

- A. A sponsor influences a young person's personal and spiritual growth.
- B. Involvement as a sponsor may enrich and renew one's own relationship with Jesus Christ and the Church.

## **Suggestions for Use**

Specific expectations and responsibilities of Confirmation sponsors vary from parish to parish. Julie shares general information that applies to all Confirmation sponsors—with special emphasis on sponsors of teens. It will be important to clearly communicate your parish's expectations of Confirmation sponsors as well as form them for their ministry.

This segment will be useful in introducing Confirmation sponsors to their ministry. Use the segment to give them an overview of the role of sponsor and then spell out specific ways to fulfill that role in the context of your parish's preparation program. The following or similar questions may help viewers reflect and share.

## **Questions for Sharing**

1. What do you expect to give of yourself as a Confirmation sponsor? What do you expect to gain from the experience?
2. How will you keep connected with your Confirmation candidate?
3. How will you encourage your candidate to participate in service activities?
4. How will you help your candidate get more involved in the parish community?
5. What do you remember of your own Confirmation and its meaning in your life that you would like to share with your candidate?
6. How can you support your candidate's lifelong journey as a Christian disciple?

## **Musical Reflection Segment**

*(Begins approximately 26:53 into program.)*

### **Summary**

The program concludes with a prayer accompanied by music and images, invoking God's help for Confirmation sponsors so that they each may be God's instrument, assisting another on the journey of faith.

The text of the prayer is included here on page 23. Those using this video may reprint the prayer to distribute to Confirmation sponsors. *(Please include copyright information.)*

### **Suggestions for Use**

This segment may be used on its own or as part of a longer prayer experience. An outline of a sample prayer service follows.

1. Open the prayer with the following or similar words:  
*Loving God, you call us here to prepare to serve you and your Church as Confirmation sponsors. As we take on the role of guide for others, we realize our own need for guidance from your Holy Spirit. Help us to share your love and faithfulness in our actions toward our candidates. May our efforts help our candidates develop a closer relationship with you and your Church.*
2. Scripture: Selections from John 14  
The following, taken from our host's wrap-up of the program and introduction to the music video segment, may be used as the reflection on Scripture for this prayer experience. If you are using the following material, do not also show the host introduction to the music video segment.

*In the Gospel of John, Jesus and his disciples gather for a meal on the night before his crucifixion. The disciples are fearful and uncertain at what they will face in the future. Jesus reassures his friends that they will not be alone. Read John 14:1-3. He will be present to them through the gift of his Holy Spirit, who will be advocate and teacher, source of peace and truth. Read John 14:15-18.*

*Like the disciples, we all face times of uncertainty. We are sometimes afraid. We seek peace. We want to know truth. As a Confirmation sponsor, you can't promise your candidate that the way ahead will always be easy. But the Sacrament of Confirmation, which you and your candidate will soon celebrate together, will offer again that promise of Jesus—the reassuring presence he is for us, through his Holy Spirit. Read John 14:26-27.*

*You become part of that reassurance, as you stand with your hand on your candidate's shoulder at the moment he or she is anointed with holy oil. You may be conscious of your own shortcomings, fears and anxieties. But remember that you, too, have been gifted with Christ's Holy Spirit. You've received the strength to be a support for your candidate.*

3. *Celebrate that gift, as we conclude with a prayer especially for you as you undertake your important role as Confirmation sponsor.*
4. Share the music video prayer.

## **A Prayer for Confirmation Sponsors**

Dear Lord,

I PRAISE AND THANK YOU for the gift of your Holy Spirit and for this opportunity to share another's journey of faith. Grant me the gift of wisdom to be an effective companion, mentor and guide on our shared journey.

HELP ME to be a good Christian witness and to openly explore with my candidate what being a Christian entails. May my words and actions be an invitation to embrace Christian discipleship.

HELP ME to be prayerful. Let my prayer life be visible and open for my candidate to see.

HELP ME to be open and attentive to the needs of my candidate. Give me guidance to know when to slow down, encourage or just be present. Give me the courage to lovingly challenge when needed so that my candidate will learn to better integrate faith and life.

HELP ME to walk beside my candidate, both listening and sharing experiences along the way.

OPEN OUR EYES to see that Confirmation is both an event and, more importantly, part of a lifelong process of reflecting upon your presence and how we respond to your call. Help me continue to be a part of my candidate's personal and spiritual growth throughout life.

MAY THIS SHARED JOURNEY strengthen and renew not only my candidate's commitment to you but also my own. May it bring us closer to you and to the community of believers with whom we share this walk of faith. AMEN.

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## **RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY**

**1) Scripture references:** Luke 2:41-52; John 14; see the *Rite of Confirmation* for other related scripture texts.

**2) *Catechism of the Catholic Church* references:** Sacraments of Initiation 1212; Confirmation 1285-1321; The Holy Spirit and the Church in the Liturgy 1091-1112; I Believe in the Holy Spirit 683-747; Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit 1830-1832; The Church, People of God, Body of Christ, Temple of the Holy Spirit 781-810; Christian Holiness 2012-2016; and Moral Life and Missionary/Witness 2044-2046.

**3) Available from St. Anthony Messenger Press:**

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