

Surviving Confirmation: Tips for parents, catechists, and other humans

Recently, my oldest child was confirmed. I've been through Confirmation a number of times as a catechist and as a family member. Because I'm a convert, my own Confirmation was different than what the teens in my life have experienced.

For one thing, I didn't feel like I had to "survive" it. There's enough information coming at you – mom, catechist, and/or sponsor – to drown you in details (and graces?).

For another thing, mine was a three-fer: As an adult catechumen, I had a Baptism+Confirmation+First Communion experience all in one night. I didn't go shopping for a new outfit; I didn't expect gifts; I didn't get to meet the bishop.

After nearly a decade of Confirmation from one angle or another, here are my survival tips.

Pray.

It's first on my list, because it's that important. Whatever else you do – or don't do – prayer should be the non-negotiable. The reason for Confirmation is to finish the work that Baptism started. All but one of the hundreds of teens I've worked with over the years have been baptized as infants. They don't remember their Baptism. This is their chance to make their choice.

In the parlance of my mother-in-law, who was confirmed back in the 1950s, confirmandi are putting on the armor of God. They're becoming warriors.

And going to war means you need lots of prayer!

There's no shortage of things to pray for, and there are no shortage of great prayers. An obvious one to pray (and memorize) is "[Come, Holy Spirit](#)." We used to pray this before each session with our confirmandi. It's a great family prayer, especially if you're on the way – well, anywhere! (In the car, I've found, is a great way to "catch" my kids and get them praying with me.)

You can also find a litany or prayer by or to the confirmand's patron saint or if you're motivated, write your own. (This is where holy cards come in super handy.)

Pray together, too. Pray with your confirmand, show them prayer, offer to pray for them. Live your faith – and prayer's a big part of your faith journey! – and they will see it. They won't be able to help but see it.

List.

Oh, the lists.

As a catechist, I'm making lists of concepts, of things to remember, of upcoming lessons.

As a parent, I'm making lists of dates and what we need and who to text.

Sometimes, in the listing, I remember to pause. And that's where this tip comes in.

For me, a list can be a brain dump, and it can free my brain to consider the larger possibilities. This is eternal. It's a one-time deal.

As I told our Confirmation class this year, "You won't be unconfirmed. Nothing can take this away from you."

Sit with that for a minute.

In the midst of the busy and the frantic and the lists, all of

which are usually necessary to some degree, there's the reason for it and the graces it brings.

In that vein, I give you – parent, catechist, godparent, interested party of some other variety – [this wonderful list about Confirmation](#). I found it a great reminder.

Ask.

I know I'm not the only one who struggles with this! Asking – for help, for directions, for guidance, for tips – when I'm supposed to be able to do it all myself.

But wait! No one said you have to do it all yourself. Isn't that why you are tapping into parish resources (or helping your parish) for Confirmation?

You have to ask for help to survive Confirmation, no matter what role you have. It's as sure as the chrism oil on the confirmandi's foreheads.

Ask a sponsor. [Here's your cheat sheet for that.](#)

Ask for prayer, from your family, from your friends, from your parish.

Ask how you can help.

Ask for details.

Don't wait for things to come to you. Ask. Offer. Find out. Learn.

Discuss.

Some people in my family might accuse me of liking this one the best, as in "Mom, *not again.*"

Every week, we cover a different topic in our Confirmation classes. Some of the topics are more interesting than others, and some of them lead to more interesting discussions in class

than others.

One week, I got off on what I thought was a tangent, and I was trying to get back on track. The last thing I remember saying was, "This isn't the end. You have to know WHY you do these weird Catholic things. You have to ASK."

The conversation took an interesting turn when one of the students raised his hand. "You know, I don't know why we don't eat meat on Fridays of Lent," he said. "When they asked me at school, I just told them I was Catholic. But why do we do that?"

It wasn't on the agenda, but it led to a great discussion.

Other times, I've had a kid – my own or one of the students in class – ask me a question that I've had to research. What's interesting is that they can Google just as easily as I can. But when they choose to ask me, they're actually asking for so much more. They're asking for input and direction. They're asking for discussion.

As adults, we also need to discuss the parts of our faith. We need to wrestle through it. Some things aren't black-and-white right-or-wrong. But other things are.

It takes courage to have a discussion. Don't be afraid of it. Pray to the Holy Spirit, reference the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, tap into the wisdom of others, and trust that you won't break anything in one discussion.

And if you're looking for great resources, I can't help but point you to [the five books I think every Catholic home should have](#).

Smile.

Someone's life is about to change, big time. Oh, you may not feel a thing, but when those graces come flooding down, your confirmand will have an ongoing opportunity.

It's worth smiling about.

I wouldn't call it fun, not exactly, and I'm not altogether sure why it warrants gifts the way it does. And yet, if this isn't a reason to celebrate, what is? Confirmation leaves [an indelible mark on the soul](#), just like Baptism does.

There's a lot to be done – to survive – for Confirmation, but if we look to the example of the early Church or the example of persecuted Christians around the world, we can be thankful that we are not being martyred for our faith. But, thanks to the armor we're putting on at Confirmation, we'll be ready for that battle, should it come to us. ☐

Smile. And enjoy the sweet smell of all those gifts of the Holy Spirit!

Do you have a link or resource to share? Send it to us at takeout@osv.com so we can share it in a future issue!