

June 3, 2017

Dear newly Confirmed Youth (and parents, sponsors & families),

You're not done yet. Keep going!

On behalf of the entire St. Francis Parish Community, congratulations on receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation, the same Holy Spirit that came upon the Apostles in the upper room that very first Pentecost! You have been given an extraordinary blessing in your life and an extraordinary gift from God.

As a community, we welcome you to the next chapter in your faith life--to borrow a phrase, **Confirmation is not an end, but rather a beginning**. As a church community, our goal is to support your faith development as true witnesses for Christ. As one of the Saints said, "Holiness is not something for some privileged few. God calls everyone." Keep Going!

You are about to embark on a great journey called high school with the latest, most-up-to-date tools--and yet also with the same, ancient gifts given to the apostles at Pentecost--the gifts of the Holy Spirit. How will God work in the world through you? How will you use the fruits of the Holy Spirit to better the world? Keep Going!

You will be ambassadors for Christ in your High School. The ultimate challenge is to be faithful to Christ in the way you live your life, treat each other and celebrate God's presence. Keep Going!

I urge you to spend time in prayer reflecting on your own unique, God-given gifts and discover how God is calling you to use your talents. Pope Francis warmly encouraged youth to keep going: "Dear Young People, do not bury your talents, the gifts that God has given you! Do not be afraid to dream of great things!" Keep Going!

I urge you to keep participating in the life of our church community at St. Francis--we are better when we are together, and stronger when we intentionally live our faith. In the introduction to *Youcat*, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI encouraged all youth to keep learning about our faith, saying, "you need to be more deeply rooted in the faith than the generation of your parents." Keep Going!

We are here to support you in the many great adventures ahead. God is there with you and gives you the best advocate in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, who will be with you in your struggles and joys. Take your message of enthusiasm, and all that you have learned, and Keep Going!

Our prayers and love are with you.

Blessings,



Fr. James Conlon, pastor

Advice to Parents from Parents with High School Youth:

+ “Encourage the students to go to Confession monthly, Adoration weekly for even 15-30 minutes will continue to foster their love and growth in a relationship with Jesus. Also, maybe they'd consider being an Extraordinary Minister of Communion or altar server even during the high school years. Ushering is also an option, helping with Vacation Bible School, any service projects etc. How about a teen-based Bible study group, where Scripture and discussion are the focus and studying the Catholic Catechism under the direction of an adult catechist?”

+ “I believe the most important thing is to have the children develop their personal relationship with Jesus. The more they receive the Sacraments, especially Reconciliation---the more they are in touch with their personal relationship with Jesus. It's important to spend time in prayer and Adoration to ask Jesus how he wants us to best use our gifts to ultimately spread God's kingdom. Also, prayer as a family is critical, we try to pray the Family Rosary a couple of times a week. Going to Confession as a family is so helpful; it makes it so normal and no big deal. We are all sinners.”

+ “Use what you've learned at St. Francis out in the world, and take the kindness and values you've learned into high school. A time of exploration, and a lot of pressures on kids in high school. High school clubs and athletic teams often expect students to also participate in community service--which is great if it can overlap with Catholic volunteer opportunities., but doesn't always happen. If there's something new you encounter in high school, or if you don't understand church's position on an issue, take the time to search on the USCCB website, or Youcat for answers to these. We've found the answers to be enlightening, uplifting, and different from what we thought.”

“As parents, we pray for our young adult children often. We talk about our own relationship with God in a natural way, using “I” and mentioning good people who live their Faith. As a married couple, we both are involved in the Church and try to be supportive of each other. We try to actively live the Faith ourselves even if in different ways because of our role as mother or father, or because of our different occupations, interests, pursuits, or friends. We gently remind our children that their Faith is their own gift from God. The Lord may indeed call them to follow a different path from that of our own, and yet the same Lord, Faith, and Baptismal grace is guiding them. We talk about the Mass as the highest form of Love, of Divine Love for us. We tell of times when we experience God's presence at Mass and of other times, when we are called to give our own presence to others by praying at Mass and in thanksgiving to God. We try sometimes successfully, other times not so much, to listen to our children when they ask questions about the Faith. We try not to shy away from the difficult questions and rather say, “I don't know.” Then we search for answers ourselves, so that we can give deeper and more expansive answers to our children's more challenging questions. We try to stay connected and involved in our young adult children's lives. We try to give them their space and yet be supportive of their dreams. In the end, we place our trust in God and take comfort, knowing that God loves them and desires only good for them.”



+ “After our kids were confirmed, we told them they had to play a part in the liturgy. They could choose to be lectors or EMHC. One was a lector, the rest were EMHCs. This kept them involved until they left for college. We also feel that it develops flexibility, since you have to think on your feet when something unusual happens during mass. Since they attended FGR, we were not involved in youth groups in high school. We have tried to encourage service to the community, both through church and within the neighborhood. As EMs, they have often served at funerals, when the family didn't have anyone they knew could serve. All you can do is help prepare them, tell and show them what you believe.”