Prayer of St. Augustine

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts be holy.
Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work be holy.
Draw me on and open wide my heart to your love.
Strengthen me, O Lord, to defend all that is holy.
Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, that I may be holy.
Guide me now, O Holy Spirit, that I may be wholly Yours.

Dear 8th Grade Families,

We have a very exciting year ahead of us! Besides being the “top dogs” of the school, having kindergarten buddies, performing the 8th grade play, and the countless other amazing things that occur this capstone year, our 8th graders will be preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation. This packet should provide you with a snapshot of the year to come.

If at anytime during the school year you have questions, prayer requests, or anything else that you’d like to share, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

Here’s to a great year!

In Christ,
Greg Aitchison
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CALENDAR OVERVIEW

Summer: Students ask someone to be their Confirmation sponsor
August/September (ASAP to reserve spot): Register child for NET Weekend Retreat
Saturday, September 15, 2018: Confirmation Program registration forms due (to parish office)
November 9-11 or November 16-18: NET Weekend Retreat for Confirmation candidates (at NET Center in West St. Paul)
Wednesday, January 30, 2018 (6:00-8:00 pm): Sponsor/Candidate Event (either in Cassidy Hall or OLG church) (if a sponsor absolutely can’t make it a parent can attend in their place)
Saturday, February 2, 2018 (5:00 pm): Mass of Sending (OLG church)
Friday, February 8, 2018 (6:00-7:30 pm): Family Confirmation Prayer Vigil and Rehearsal (OLG church)
Sunday, February 10, 2018 (2:00 pm): Confirmation Mass (Cathedral of St. Paul in St. Paul)

The following will all either occur during the school day (e.g. within Religion class) or be explained in class and then completed by students at home:

Fall: Confirmation unit taught to all 8th grade students
Fall/Winter: Parents/Candidate Faith Interviews
Fall/Winter: Sponsor/Candidate Faith Interviews
Fall/Winter: Sacrament of Reconciliation (Days of Mercy at OLG)
Winter: Confirmation Saint Video Project for all 8th grade students
Winter: Letter of Request to Fr. Kevin written by candidates

Throughout the School Year: All students completing four hours of service per trimester
Throughout the School Year: Discipleship Small Groups for all 8th grade students (on Wednesdays during the school day) with occasional follow-up assignment sheets to share and discuss with parents after each one

SPONSOR INFO

Students should acquire a sponsor sometime over the summer. Below are some guidelines and tips regarding this:

- The sponsor must be chosen by the one to be Confirmed (parents may certainly suggest possible sponsors, but should not choose the sponsor for his/her child)
- The sponsor must be someone other than the candidate’s mother and father
- The sponsor must be a practicing Catholic who has received Baptism, 1st
Communion, and Confirmation, and leads a life in harmony with the faith

- Godparents can be a great choice if they are still active in their faith and someone the candidate looks up to
- Sometimes sponsors are chosen as a way to honor a relative or flatter a friend, but this should not be the reason for choosing them. A sponsor’s primary role is to be a companion on the journey of faith. They will be asked to share their advice and faith with your child and will be expected to take their role as a spiritual mentor seriously.
- If students are having a tough time thinking of a sponsor:
  - Think of family members (grandparent, aunt/uncle, cousin, etc.)
  - Think of friends of your own that you could suggest to your child
  - Ask your child to think of their friends’ parents and see if any of them would be a good option
  - One of your child’s Discipleship Group Leaders could be a great choice (Discipleship Groups will start in the fall of 8th grade)
  - Call or e-mail other 8th grade parents to see if they have any suggestions

STUDENTS AND PARENTS:
Would you like to become Catholic?

- If a student has already been baptized and received their 1st Holy Communion in the Catholic Church, then the process is pretty straightforward: He/she will register for the 8th grade Confirmation program at the start of next school year and will then follow the program until its completion with the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- If for whatever reason a student has not yet been baptized and/or received their 1st Holy Communion, we invite you to ask your son/daughter if they would like to be fully received into the Catholic Church alongside their fellow classmates next year. If their answer is “Yes” and you approve of their decision, then we (Fr. Kevin and myself) will need to know sooner rather than later so that the process for receiving the missing sacrament(s) (along with Confirmation) can occur during their 8th grade year. This could be a beautiful gift to your son/daughter and also the rest of the grade:
  - In years past we have had students complete the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Communion, and Confirmation) during their 8th grade year at OLG. The excitement of each of these students was a joy to see and the support and enthusiasm from their classmates was very moving.
- Similar to the above, if for whatever reason you (a parent) have not yet been baptized, received your 1st Holy Communion, and/or been confirmed, we also invite you to consider being fully
received into the Catholic Church. Even if you still have questions and/or aren’t quite sure about entering the Catholic Church at this time, I invite you contact me if you are at all interested in finding out more. This could be a special opportunity to prepare for the sacraments alongside your son/daughter.

NET WEEKEND RETREAT

As stated in the information packet that went home at the end of 7th grade, students participating in the 8th grade Confirmation program are required to attend 1 weekend Confirmation retreat in the fall. This retreat is run by the NET Team (a group that Fr. Kevin was a part of years ago and the same group that now comes and leads the 5th and 7th grade retreats at OLG).

Because of the amount of OLG students in this year's Confirmation program we have reserved spots for two different retreat weekends (dates listed below). If you have not yet signed up for one of these retreats, please do so AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

There is no cost for the online retreat registration (this cost is taken care of with Confirmation registration). Simply type out the link below and register on the webpage that comes up. More details about the retreat (what to bring, start/end times, retreat location, etc.) can be found at each link.

November 9-11: https://mission.netusa.org/OLOGNovember9
November 16-18: https://mission.netusa.org/OLOGNovember16

If for whatever reason one of the two dates above does not work, students will need to attend a Confirmation retreat on another weekend before the date of Confirmation. These weekends fill up fast as OLG does not have reserved spots set aside for them, so please sign up as soon as possible to reserve a spot. You will also need to contact NET to let them know you are from OLG so they can waive your registration fee: (651) 450-6833, www.netusa.org.

DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

Jesus calls each of us to be disciples by following Him on our journey to being the saints we are called to be. To this end, students in 8th grade will be participating in Discipleship Groups throughout the year. “D-Groups” are teams of approximately 8 students (divided by gender) that meet on a regular basis with two adult mentors from the school and/or parish community.
Confirmation is a Sacrament of Initiation; and while many treat Confirmation as an end, initiation means beginning. These months leading up to Confirmation are the perfect time for students to come together and ask questions, learn about their faith, and have adult mentors who will help them walk the road of discipleship. In doing so, it is our hope that students will be prepared to receive the grace of the Holy Spirit at Confirmation and be excited to continue on their journey of discipleship with Jesus!

Students will be responsible for completing a few simple assignments throughout the year asking them to reflect on what they have learned and discussed during their D-Group time. Students are required to share these assignments with their parents and have them signed before turning them in. More information about this is in the “Parent Involvement” section in this packet.

Discipleship Groups meet about every other Wednesday (from 9:45-10:45 am) throughout the school year, 15 times in all. An excellent, video-based curriculum provided by YDisciple (a youth discipleship platform from the Augustine Institute) will guide the meetings throughout the year. Parents, we highly encourage you to watch these videos as well (more information on how to access the videos is in the “Parent Involvement” section in this packet.

CONFIRMATION SAINT NAME

Later this year in Religion class we’ll be studying the saints. As a part of this unit students will be asked to research and then choose their own Confirmation saint – a holy person that they feel a strong connection with and inspires them to live out their own life of holiness. Students will then be required to research their saint’s life in more detail and will eventually create a video presentation showcasing him or her. After watching one another’s saint videos in class students will have an assignment requiring them to share their saint project with their parents.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

One of the primary objectives of Our Lady of Grace’s Confirmation program is to have parents play an active role in each child’s faith formation. However, it’s no secret that a) Teenagers aren’t always excited to sit down and chat about life with their parents and b) For whatever reason, in today’s day and age it seems almost taboo to talk openly about one’s faith (especially in public!). To that end, we have built some faith sharing opportunities into the Confirmation program. It is our hope that these opportunities (e.g. Parent Faith Interviews, Confirmation Retreat Follow-Up, D-Group Follow-Ups, etc.) help spark good discussions of faith and life that serve to help our students grow both closer to God and their parents.
Besides these required moments of faith sharing, what can you do to help your son/daughter (and yourself) grow stronger in faith this year?

1. **Sunday Mass – Every Sunday, no matter what.**
   a. When we make Mass a priority over work, sports, vacation, sleeping in, etc., we demonstrate to our children that *faith comes first* and nothing in life is more important. When we don’t, we inherently tell our children that (fill-in-the-blank) is more important.
   b. OLG has 5 weekend Masses to choose from: Saturday 5:00 pm, Sunday 7:30 am, Sunday 9:30 am, Sunday 11:30 am, Sunday 6:00 pm
   c. Out of town or not able to make an OLG Mass? Head to www.MassTimes.org to find churches and Masses available no matter where in the world you are!

2. **The Sacrament of Reconciliation: The most underappreciated and underused sacrament of all!**
   a. Go on a Reconciliation date (“Get forgiveness, then get pancakes!”). Head to a church for Confession, then celebrate with breakfast or ice cream or something else after.
   b. Reconciliation at OLG: Saturdays 9:00-10:00 am / Tuesdays 8:30-8:55 am

3. **Pray with your child**
   a. Before meals (at home AND at restaurants), in the car, before bed, in the adoration chapel, at Thursday Morning Rosary, etc.

4. **Pray for your child**
   a. Bless your child with a short prayer and a sign of the cross on their forehead
   b. Say special prayers for your child every day and *tell* them that you’re praying for them

5. **Practice redemptive suffering for your child**
   a. Offer something up as a special prayer for them: Workout. Skip dessert/coffee. Turn the radio off in the car while driving somewhere. Don’t use your phone apps for a day. Etc.
   b. (If you don’t know much about redemptive suffering, ask your son/daughter to teach you more about it!)

6. **Check out “Catholic Netflix”, FORMED.org** (Videos, books, audio talks, etc.!)  
   a. OLG has a free Formed.org account. Follow these instructions to sign on:  
      i. Go to www.formed.org, then click on “Register”
      ii. Enter the parish code RBXK8F and your e-mail address
      iii. Create a profile, then log in and you’re good to go!
   a. You are highly encouraged to check out the videos we’ll be watching and discussing during our D-Group time. We’ll be doing parts or all of the following YDisciple studies throughout the year: Follow Me, True Beauty – Womanhood / True Strength – Manhood, and Prayer.
   b. There are *TONS* of great Catholic resources on this site – Check ‘em out!

7. **How do you spell love? T – I – M - E**
   a. Put aside your phone, your work, your to-do list, etc. and just spend time with your child. Go out on a “date”, go for a walk together, chat while making dinner, shoot hoops outside, play a video game together, etc. Simply find ways to show your love and desire to know your child by spending time with him or her.