



Diocese of Scranton  
Vocation Office

# Confirmation Vocation Lesson Plan



**Objective-** To invite Confirmation-age Catholics to understand their unique relationship with God and their particular vocation. Students will be introduced to various prayer styles, assisted in identifying a type that fits their personality, encouraged to reflect on their multiple gifts, and invited to think more deeply about how God is asking them to use these unique gifts to serve him and his Church as they prepare for Confirmation.

The following exercise is designed for a standard 40-minute class period. It can be extended or shortened easily.

1. Prayer
2. Begin by discussing how they are reaching a stage in life during which their differences become more apparent. While elementary school students typically learn the same things in the same manner, play the same sports, and are otherwise largely interchangeable, adolescents begin to diversify. This leads to a discussion about how they are starting to specialize—diverse friend groups, different academic tracks in school for math, science, history, etc.; and choosing particular sports or extracurricular activities. There is nothing wrong with acknowledging that their comparative aptitude in various sports, school subjects, or social settings will be different. They understand that the student next to them may be a better volleyball player or mathematician but should be reminded to have confidence that each has particular gifts and strengths to share with the world. I like to reassure the students that while they may not have discovered their talents yet, the time will come.
3. The conversation then moves to a discussion about prayer in particular. Here, you should acknowledge that many of them may not find spiritual benefit from the styles of prayer they used in their childhood. There is nothing abnormal about this. The academic, social, and athletic activities they enjoyed at seven years old are no longer enjoyable. Like in every other part of their lives, they are at an age where diversification and specialization are becoming more critical; it is time for them to discover a style of prayer that works best for them.
4. Next, distribute the *Prayer Style Inventory*. Consult the *Prayer Style Guide* for a summary of the four prayer styles. Here, the teacher reads through each question on the form, explaining in more depth where necessary. After completing the forms, ask the students to tally the number of answers they have for each letter.
5. Ask for a show of hands for each of the four letters (“Who has mostly A? Who has mostly B?” etc.) Then, explain the four prayer styles outlined in the *Prayer Style Guide*. Include in this description the saint after whom the style was named and the general characteristics of the

type. Remind the students that the inventory is brief and imprecise. If a student has multiple letters tied for the most or even feels more drawn to one of the styles described, their assessment of themselves is more important than the result of the inventory.

- a. *Ignatian Prayer*- St. Ignatius of Loyola, *imaginative prayer*
  - b. *Augustinian Prayer*-St. Augustine of Hippo, *relational prayer*
  - c. *Franciscan Prayer*—St. Francis of Assisi, *active prayer*
  - d. *Thomistic Prayer*—St. Thomas Aquinas, *intellectual prayer*
6. After each style has been explained, walk the students through an experience of each prayer style using the *Prayer Style Guide*. First, ask the students to calm themselves, close their eyes, and breathe to invite in the presence of the Holy Spirit.
- a. *Ignatian Prayer*—Use the provided scripture passage to invite the students to *imagine* their presence in the story described. Focus primarily on the five senses and emotional experiences that are evoked.
  - b. *Augustinian Prayer*—Use the provided scripture passage to invite the students into a *conversation* with God. Instruct them to view prayer primarily as a conversation between a God speaking directly with them.
  - c. *Franciscan Prayer*—Since this prayer style requires action, it is not well-suited for a classroom activity. Ask the students, “What is the most impressive thing you have ever seen?” If they are not forthcoming, you can provide a few examples (the Grand Canyon, Niagara Falls, a sunset, an impressive performance in sports, a beautiful church, etc.) This can lead to a discussion about how acknowledging magnificent things and appreciating their beauty can itself be a prayer. After this, ask the students if they have ever had the experience of *being in the zone* in sports, music, art, or serving people in need. This experience of focusing on an activity can also be conducive to prayer. I like using the line from *Chariots of Fire*, “I know God made me to serve him, but he also made me fast,” to help them understand this concept. Remind the students that these experiences must be reflected upon—it is not enough to just run a mile and feel God’s presence. You must go back and explore in prayer how and why you felt his presence and discern what he is calling you to do.
  - d. *Thomistic Prayer*—use the provided scripture passage to invite the students to *understand* what is happening. *Thomistic*-style prayers may benefit from asking questions, exploring meaning, and digging deeper into a passage.
7. After the conclusion of this section, remind students that these are not set-in-stone prayer styles but a reminder to constantly seek out methods of prayer that are helping them grow closer to God. If they struggle spiritually, it does not mean that God isn’t speaking to them, merely that they should find new ways to listen to him.
8. Next, segue into a discussion about vocation. Just as each of the students has a unique style of prayer, they each have received from God unique gifts and a unique call.
9. Ask the students to identify in one another particular gifts. You can lead them with questions like:
- a. “Who is the best athlete in the group?”
  - b. “Who is the best mathematician?”
  - c. “The most gifted historian?”
  - d. “The best writer?”
  - e. “Musician?”
  - f. “Who in the class would you go to speak to if you had a personal problem, i.e., the best listener?”
  - g. “Who is the best problem solver?”

- h. "Builder?"
  - i. "If you had to choose one person to offer a speech in front of the entire school, who would you choose?"
10. Depending on how well your confirmation class knows each other, you may have to ask them to identify these gifts within themselves. Try to get as many students involved in this process as necessary. It is also helpful to remind the students that while they may not be aware of their unique gifts, they have them. Some don't discover those particular charisms until later in life, but they always come.
  11. Explain that different vocations, callings, and missions in life require different gifts. Part of discerning where God is calling you is identifying which gifts he has given you through your self-awareness or what others say. Ask them to determine what gifts are necessary for various vocations or life paths.
    - a. "What gifts are necessary for a good priest?"
    - b. "Sister?"
    - c. "Teacher?"
    - d. "Parent?"
    - e. "Doctor?"
  12. This lesson can be easily tied to the sacrament of Confirmation. At Confirmation, the Holy Spirit is revealing and strengthening those unique gifts from God.
  13. Remind the students that the primary purpose of this lesson is not to put themselves in a box but to identify that each of them has a unique relationship with God and a unique vocation in life. Now is the time for them to explore these things, test them, and grow into their irrepeatable place in God's plan.
  14. "Questions?"
  15. Closing prayer.



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# Prayer Styles

## A - Ignatian Spirituality



### St. Ignatius of Loyola

Ignatian spirituality is named for St. Ignatius of Loyola. St. Ignatius was a Spanish soldier, a man more interested in action than reflection. During a battle, Ignatius was struck in the leg with a cannonball which, obviously, required some serious recovery time. During his recovery Ignatius began by reading action novels, but when they ran out he turned to stories of saints and the scripture. During this time he learned that he had intense spiritual experience when he imagined *he was present* in the stories he read.

### Prayer Style

Ignatian spirituality engages the *imagination*. Someone who has this type of spirituality should try to place themselves inside the story when reading the Bible. Imagine how a particular scene would engage all five of your senses—what would it feel, smell, look, or sound like? What emotions would *you* experience? Which character in the story can *you* identify with. This prayer style does not have to be limited to scripture. Make a special effort to cultivate and engage your imagination and senses to more fully connect with God.

### Prayer Example

Read Mark 4:35-41 aloud. Ask the students to close their eyes and find a comfortable position. After reading through the passage once, go back, but this time ask questions that encourage the students to place themselves in the situation. Ask them to think about what it looks, sounds, and feels like to be on a ship in the middle of a storm with Jesus. Instruct them to place themselves on the boat and imagine what would be going through their heads. Then invite them to consider the rush of emotion that would come when Jesus commanded the sea and the wind to be still, and they obeyed.

## B - Augustinian Spirituality



St. Augustine of Hippo	Prayer Style
Augustinian spirituality is named for St. Augustine of Hippo. St. Augustine became Catholic later in life after a long, drawn-out journey. He is credited with writing the world’s first autobiography, <i>The Confessions</i> , a story of his conversion. During this conversion, Augustine feels a deep personal connection with God, “To fall in love with God is the greatest romance; to seek him the greatest adventure; to find him, the greatest human achievement.”	Augustinian spirituality is about <i>relationship</i> . A wise man once said that prayer is a lot like going fishing with someone you care about. Sometimes you are having a conversation. Sometimes, you are simply sitting together in silence. This style is different from Ignatian in that you are not so much placing yourself in a scripture passage, rather, you are imagining that God is speaking to you directly right now. People drawn to this prayer style should envision their prayer life as a constant conversation with God.
Prayer Example	
Read Isaiah 43:1-4 aloud but replace the words <i>Jacob</i> and <i>Israel</i> with the name of one of the students in the class who identified as an Augustinian. Then replace the names of locations mentioned with towns nearby. Remind the students that every word of scripture is not simply a historical remnant, it is directed to them right now.	

C - Franciscan Spirituality



St. Francis of Assisi	Prayer Style
Franciscan spirituality is named after St. Francis of Assisi. St. Francis was an Italian friar who gave up all his material goods after his conversion to live a life of prayer and service to the poor. However, you may also know him as the patron saint of animals and founder of the Franciscans!	Franciscan spirituality is about <i>action</i> . Someone who's suited to this prayer type may find it helpful to pray with things they can see, do, or use that are directly and concretely available to them like watching a beautiful sunset or going on an intense run and then acknowledging how or where they felt God's presence in those things.
Prayer Example	
Ask the students, "What is the most impressive thing you have ever seen?" If they are not forthcoming, you can provide a few examples (the Grand Canyon, Niagara Falls, a sunset, an impressive performance in sports, a beautiful church, etc.) This can lead to a discussion about how acknowledging magnificent things and appreciating their beauty can itself be a prayer. After this, ask the students if they have ever had the experience of <i>being in the zone</i> in sports, music, art, or serving people in need. This experience of focusing on an activity can also be conducive to prayer. I like using the line from <i>Chariots of Fire</i> , "I know God made me to serve him, but he also made me fast," to help them understand this concept. Remind the students that these experiences must be reflected upon—it is not enough to just run a mile and feel God's presence. You must go back and explore in prayer how and why you felt his presence and discern what he is calling you to do.	

# D - Thomistic Spirituality



St. Thomas Aquinas	Prayer Style
Thomistic spirituality is named after St. Thomas Aquinas. St. Thomas is one of the great theologians in Church history. He wrote book after book synthesizing the faith. What was most impressive about Thomas, however, was his ability to gather information from so many sources. Thomas read scripture, the Fathers of the Church, and theology, but he also utilized Jewish, Muslim, and Greek philosophy as he formulated his writings about God.	Thomistic spirituality is concerned with the <i>intellect</i> . A person drawn to this type of prayer needs to engage their mind while conversing with God. Ask questions, seek answers, dive deeper into the Bible and theology. Since this type of spirituality is constantly trying to learn, a person who prays this way needs to constantly be reminded about the emotional side of their relationship with God.
Prayer Example	
Read Genesis 1:1-4 aloud. Begin asking questions about the passage just read aloud. What is the purpose of this story? If the universe is 14.7 billion years old, how are we supposed to understand a six-day creation? What does it mean that God created out of nothing? How do the phrases <i>light</i> and <i>darkness</i> mean more than simply physical phenomena? What is their spiritual meaning? Encourage the students to come up with questions about the passage themselves and bring them to God in prayer. Remind them that this is not like studying for a class; it is not the answers that are useful but diving deeper and bringing questions to God.	