

Confirmation Class

Vocations 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?"
 - f. Etc.
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.