

Preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation



“The catechists are thrilled with the richness of the videos, the amount of information, and the really good class discussion that has resulted.”

Dot Bowler

DRE, St. Paul Parish, Hingham, MA

Faced with the prospect of preparing seventy high school students for Confirmation without the possibility of in-person instruction, Dot Bowler, the Director of Religious Education at St. Paul Parish in Hingham, Massachusetts, knew “we had to have meat in the program.”

For her confirmandi, who would meet in small groups via Zoom with their catechists, Bowler chose *Wild Goose*, a 14-part series on the Holy Spirit, and *YDisciple*, a program to help young people discern their vocations.

To kick off the year, Bowler tapped what might seem an unlikely choice for Confirmation preparation: *Presence: The Mystery of the Eucharist*.

Presence is an “overview of the story of salvation,” Bowler said.

Beyond *Presence*’s value in recapping salvation history, St. Paul Parish has a strong devotion to the Eucharist. The church’s pastor always refers to the Eucharist in his homily, Bowler said, and the parish continued Eucharistic Adoration even as the COVID-19 pandemic closed church buildings. Moreover, Sean Cardinal O’Malley had declared a Year of the Eucharist that began on Holy Thursday of 2020.

“When I watched *Presence*, I was taken by how much I learned,” Bowler said.



***“What distinguishes
Presence from
other programs is
the richness of the
material and the way
it’s presented.”***



Dot Bowler

She liked the tie-in between the Old and New Testaments and the variety of the presentations.

“The videos are done so well,” Bowler said.

The real test of the program came when the students and their catechists began to use *Presence*.

Two to three catechists attended each Zoom meeting with eight to fifteen students. One catechist was always gauging student reactions.

“[The students] were absolutely engaged,” Bowler said. “They made really good observations.”

Bowler said that student attendance was “almost 100 percent” every week. She was surprised, she said, to start receiving emails from students who had missed a class, requesting the log-in information to attend another group’s meeting.

“I was amazed at how responsible they were being,” Bowler said. “They must have been liking what they saw.”

In regard to her catechists, Bowler noted that many had been teaching Confirmation preparation “for a very long time. They can be very tough to impress,” she said.

Instead, Bowler said, her catechists were “thrilled” with the “richness of the videos, the amount of information, and the really good class discussion” that resulted.

Prior to using *Presence* with Confirmation students, Bowler had invited parents of the parish’s First Communicants to watch the four videos on formed.org and received positive feedback from that group in an end-of-program survey.

“I knew all the information, but it made me understand it in a way I could help explain to my child,” one parent said.

“I enjoyed the parent videos,” another commented. “They explained things well so that we could, in turn, help our kids.”

Bowler recommended using *Presence* with parents of First Communicants or as an adult education study.

“And I certainly would recommend it for high school students for Confirmation,” Bowler said.



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