



# DIRECTOR'S MANUAL

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# CALLED TO MERCY

## CONFIRMING YOUNG PEOPLE FOR A MISSION OF WITNESS

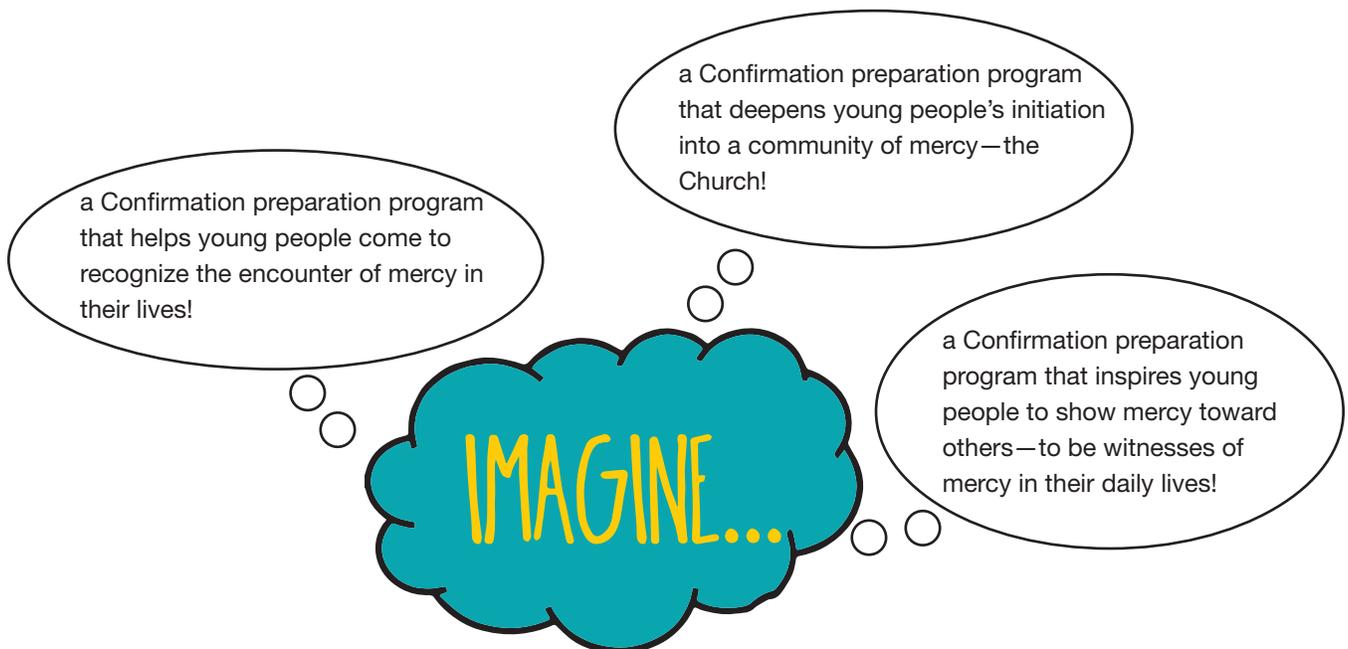


“Dear brothers and sisters, I have often thought of how the Church may render more clearly her mission to be a witness to mercy. . . . It is a journey which begins with spiritual conversion.”

—Pope Francis, homily on the Year of Mercy, March 13, 2015

## Introduction

At the heart of *Called to Mercy: Confirming Young People for a Mission of Witness* is the teaching of Jesus and the Church’s mission of mercy. We share your longing to invite your young people into a spiritual path of reflection and conversion of the heart—into a deepened understanding of what it means to be a person of mercy—and to invite them more deeply into a Church that is a witness of God’s mercy in the world.



*Called to Mercy: Confirming Young People for a Mission of Witness* awakens young people to what Pope Francis calls “the Lord’s most powerful message: mercy” (homily, March 17, 2013). Let’s start a revolution of mercy!

# Welcome to *Called to Mercy*: Confirming Young People for a Mission of Witness

## What Is Unique about the Approach of *Called to Mercy*?



*Called to Mercy* combines the best of all learning experiences and opportunities, tapping the strength and appeal of online learning modules with the power of interspersed, gathered, face-to-face sessions and a retreat experience.

**LONG, LONG AGO**—okay, about 24 months ago—Saint Mary’s Press set out to create a truly new approach to Confirmation preparation to appeal to, and meet the real-life needs of, young people and Confirmation coordinators. We gathered groups of young people who had recently been confirmed and asked them what they loved about their Confirmation preparation and what they didn’t like so much. Then we asked them to design an approach to Confirmation preparation that would excite them, an approach that would match how they best learn, that would foster what they want in terms of a sense of community, and that would teach them what they would expect to learn in such a program. We asked a handful of Confirmation coordinators, youth ministers, and directors of religious education to do the same.

**CALLED TO MERCY** is the result of that work. We designed ideas, tested them, redesigned the ideas, tested them again. Then we brought in a team of experts who specialize in designing online e-learning courses. They were on fire for what we wanted to do and said, “We sure wish there had been a Confirmation approach like this when we were kids.” These nerds (seriously, this is what they call themselves) got so excited about our project that they jumped

in and committed to creating an incredible online learning web application that could be accessed from any smartphone, tablet, laptop, desktop—just about any device that can access the web. They said: “This is so cool! No one has ever asked us to create an app like this before. If we’d had an app like this when we were kids, our Confirmation experience would have been so different. Let’s make this an incredible experience that excites kids about ‘going to’ Confirmation ‘class’ in a whole new way!”

”

“This is the Lord’s most powerful message: mercy.”

—Pope Francis, *homily*, March 17, 2013

Knowing we had the best minds in the world at work on how to deliver the program, our next step was to be clear on the content, what we want the young people to encounter through the experience. Off we went on a deep spiritual dive into the heart of Jesus’ message of mercy. We read and listened to everything the Church, and recently Pope Francis, has said about being witnesses of mercy in the world. We sat back, reflected, and prayerfully considered the implications of the call to mercy. At the time, we had no idea that the release of this program

would coincide with Pope Francis’s call for a Holy Year of Mercy to advance the Church’s “mission to be a witness of mercy” (homily on the Year of Mercy, March 13, 2015). When we made the connection, we took it as a sign that the content of *Called to Mercy* is faithfully aligned with the Great Commandment and the call of the Gospel to be people of mercy, a Church of mercy. What could be more powerful than to design the content of this Confirmation preparation program around this great, holy, and most powerful call to lives of mercy—the essence and heart of what it means to live the Christian life?

**WE THEN** gathered a group of passionate and creative writers, designers, and practitioners to bring all of these elements together—the ideas of the young people and coordinators, the e-learning interactions created by the nerds, and the content and desired encounter—in a way that would make sense . . .

## AND WOULD RESULT IN HEARING YOUNG PEOPLE SAY THINGS LIKE:

I love *Called to Mercy*. It is so interesting, and it relates to my life.

Do you mean I can do my Confirmation sessions whenever it works best for my schedule, and on my smartphone? I love *Called to Mercy* because before I had to choose between dance practice or Confirmation class. Now I don’t have to.

I love that with *Called to Mercy* I can complete each module on my own, at my own pace, and that the e-learning activities really apply to my life and make me think. I honestly had never thought about some of these things before.

*Called to Mercy* has helped me believe that I deserve to be treated with mercy by others and has led me to want to live a life of mercy toward others.

## AND HEARING CONFIRMATION COORDINATORS SAY THINGS LIKE:

I love that *Called to Mercy* is active learning, not passive reading of a book or simply watching videos. It’s real, deep, relevant learning.

*Called to Mercy* has helped me solve so many of the challenges I’ve faced in running our Confirmation program, such as lesson planning and recruiting and training catechists to ensure consistency.

I love that in *Called to Mercy* I can track and observe the progress of every young person in the Confirmation program. I can see what they post and share in every online e-learning module. I can get direct feedback on their thoughts and reflections, so I can see their journey and transformation unfold over the course of preparation.

I love how *Called to Mercy* provides not only the online learning modules but also the face-to-face community-building gatherings that allow us to process, guide, and reflect more deeply on each young person’s individual learning, and to build community.

I especially love that with *Called to Mercy* every single young person is engaged, involved, and participating in learning. It’s so different from the traditional classroom approach where passive learning models are used and where many of the young people seemed disinterested and disengaged.

*Called to Mercy* has changed the lives of the young people who have been a part of it, and it has changed our community.

That’s the story of *Called to Mercy*. Now let’s turn our attention to all the pieces of the program and help you get started implementing *Called to Mercy* in your community.

# What Every Young Person Will Need

one of these



or one of these



or one of these



or one of these



**PLUS**



OR



OR

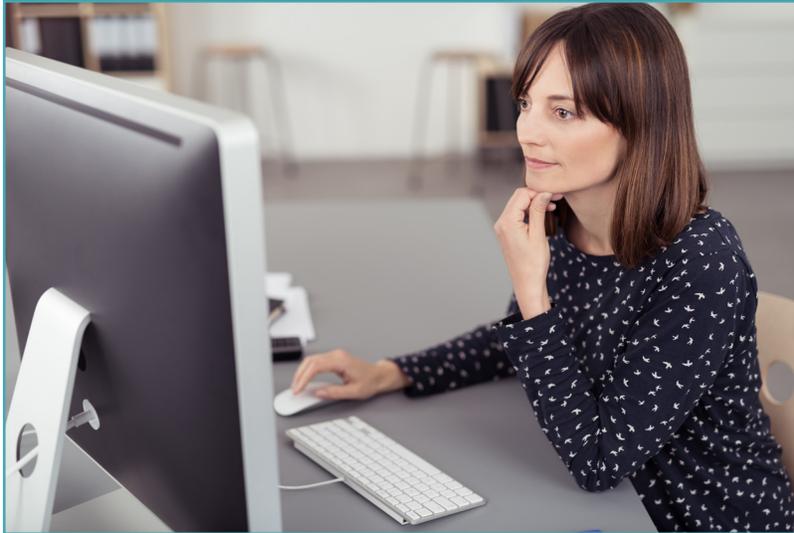


Then it's as simple as logging in at [mlearn.smp.org](https://mlearn.smp.org)

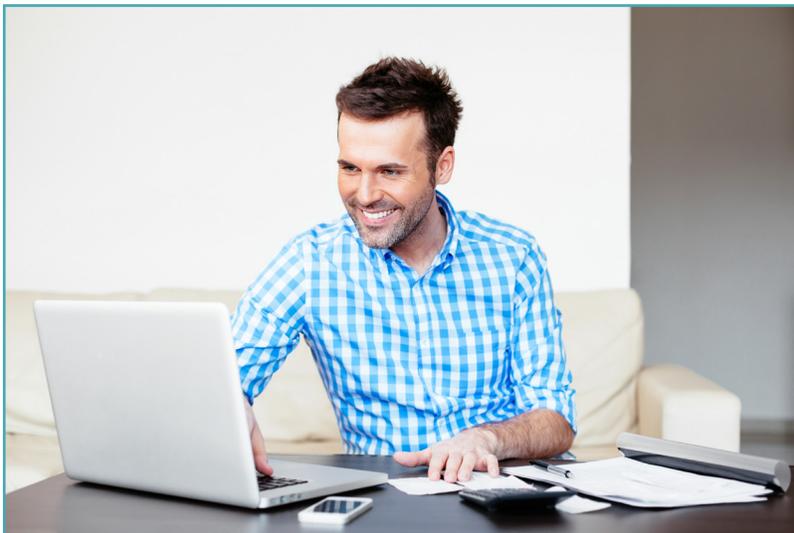
The young people are all set and ready to begin learning module 1!

## What Every Program Director Will Need

As the program director, you will receive access to the *Called to Mercy* administrative site. From there you can set up distinct “sections” of young people each with its own leader (optional), access section codes to provide to your young people, move the young people into different sections, and manage the program overall. We believe you will have the best experience using the administrative site by accessing it online with either one of these (any make or model, PC or Mac):



OR



But you can access the administrative site from any device that can connect to the web.

Simply log in at [mlearn.smp.org](https://mlearn.smp.org)

# Steps to Register Your Parish and Enroll Your Young People

**Step 1:** Call our Customer Care Team at 800-533-8095. We will walk you through everything you need to do to register your parish and enroll your young people in *Called to Mercy*. We are delighted to assist you and excited to get you started. Our team is available Monday through Friday, from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. CST.

**Step 2:** Once your parish is registered, we will give you a personal guided tour through the process of enrolling your young people, and we will show you how to navigate through the administrative site of the program so that you can monitor and manage all kinds of great things.

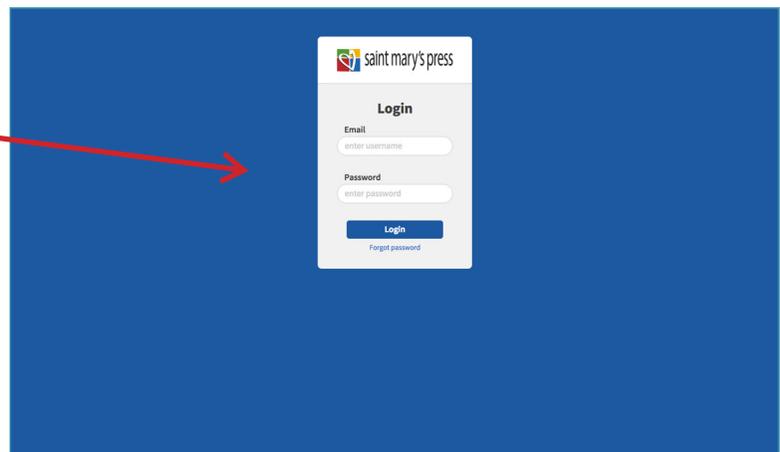
**Step 3:** You will receive a confirmation e-mail. Open this and click the link to reset your password. Once your password is reset, you can log in to your account at [mlearn.smp.org](http://mlearn.smp.org).

The log-in page looks like this:

- Enter the e-mail address you provided us when you called in to register your parish.
- Enter your password.
- Click or touch the “Login” button.

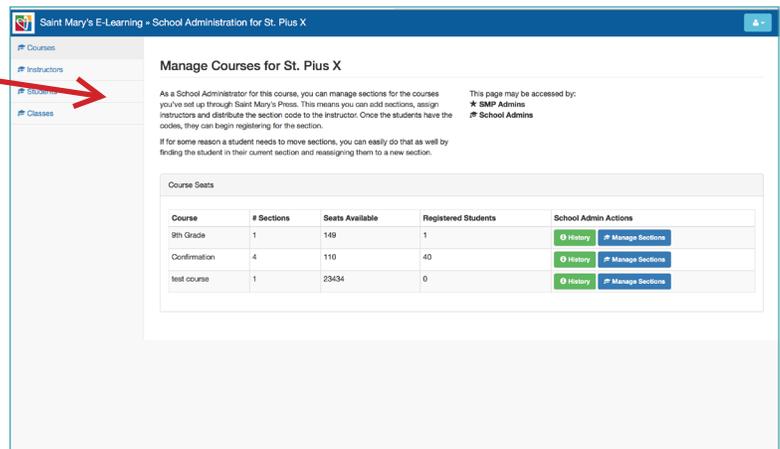


MEET PAT, CAROL, CANDY, AND JANET



**Step 4:** You'll come to a page that looks like this:

This is the administrative site for *Called to Mercy*. It is referred to as a “course” here because it is one of many different “courses” that utilizes the Saint Mary’s Press mobile learning environment.



From the “Manage Courses” screen, you can click on “Manage Sections” to set up unique and distinct “sections” of the program. If just one person is serving as the program director, managing and overseeing the progress of all the young people, you would set up just one section. If you have a large group with multiple leaders monitoring and guiding the young people, you would organize the young people into distinct sections and assign an “administrator” to oversee and monitor each section. A unique access code will be provided for each section. The leaders will share the appropriate code with their students, and the students will enroll in that section at [www.mlearn.smp.org/enroll](http://www.mlearn.smp.org/enroll).

The “Manage Sections” screen looks like this:

Manage Sections for Course: Confirmation

Here you can manage Sections in the **Confirmation** Course for St. Plus X. This page may be accessed by:  
 \* SMP Admins  
 # School Admins

St. Plus X currently has **110** Open Seats in Confirmation.

[+ Add a Section](#)

Section Name	Section Code	Course	Section #	Instructor	# Enrolled	Reg. start	Class start	Class end	Status
St. Plus Confirmation Underway Section	abHtrq5x31	Confirmation	1	Nerdery School	13	2015-02-01	2015-02-08	2020-02-15	Underway
St. Plus Confirmation Pending Section	atUzz2arin	Confirmation	2	Nerdery School	9	2020-02-01	2020-02-08	2020-02-15	Pending
St. Plus Confirmation Registering Section	atUzz2aria	Confirmation	3	SMP Instructor	9	2015-02-01	2020-02-08	2020-02-15	Registering
St. Plus Confirmation Concluded Section	atUzz2ariz	Confirmation	4	SMP Instructor	9	2014-02-01	2014-02-08	2014-02-15	Concluded

← Previous 1 Next →

**Step 5:** This is the screen you will see next. From here you can manage the enrollment of each individual young person in the program. You can move individuals from one section to another, change their enrollment status, or remove a young person from the program by clicking “Suspended.”

Current Status: Underway. The Class Start Date has past but the Class End Date has not arrived. Students still enroll in the course, and enrolled Students can access the course.

Enrollments

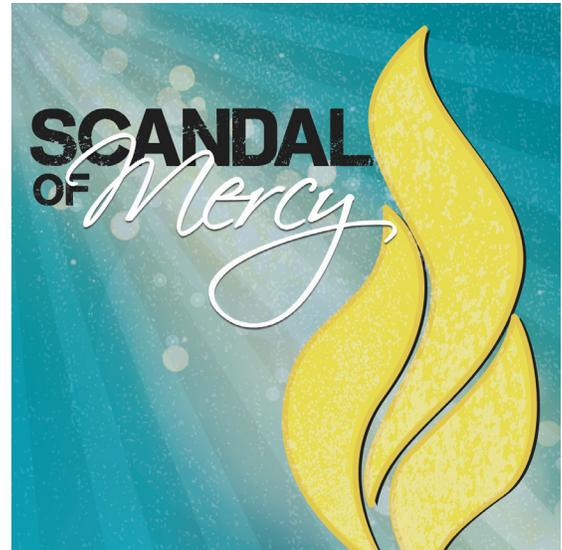
Name	Enabled?	Suspended?	Assign to Section:	Update
Timmy Jones	Yes	No	Confirmation Section 1	<input type="radio"/> Suspended <input checked="" type="radio"/> Not Suspended
Johnny Jackson	Yes	No	Confirmation Section 1	<input type="radio"/> Suspended <input checked="" type="radio"/> Not Suspended
Bobby Smith	Yes	No	Confirmation Section 1	<input type="radio"/> Suspended <input checked="" type="radio"/> Not Suspended
Bobby Smith	Yes	No	Confirmation Section 1	<input type="radio"/> Suspended <input checked="" type="radio"/> Not Suspended
Tom O'Connor	Yes	Yes	Confirmation Section 1	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Suspended <input type="radio"/> Not Suspended
	Disabled	No	Confirmation Section 1	<input type="radio"/> Suspended <input checked="" type="radio"/> Not Suspended

If you ever have any questions about managing a course or section, we will be delighted to assist you. Just give our Customer Care Team a call at 800-533-8095. Our team is available Monday through Friday, from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. CST.

## Original Music Produced Just for *Called to Mercy*

One of the things we heard repeatedly from young people when designing *Called to Mercy* was that the program must have music as part of the experience. We knew we could find existing music to use, but we decided to do something even more meaningful. We put out a call to songwriters across the country and asked them to submit original songs that directly relate to the primary themes in each of the learning modules for *Called to Mercy*. The result is a collection of original songs (and one classic) written, recorded, and produced exclusively for *Called to Mercy* in a collection titled *Scandal of Mercy* (© 2016 MissionEighty5™ Music):

1. "Holy Spirit," by Steven Joubert
2. "Scandal of Love," by Greg Walton
3. "Searching," by Paul J. Kim, featuring Jenny Pixler
4. "Scandal of Mercy," by Thomas Muglia
5. "Start a Fire," by Ike Ndolo
6. "Despite," by Greg Walton
7. "Scandal of Mercy" (acoustic), by Thomas Muglia
8. "Amazing Grace," by Sarah Kroger

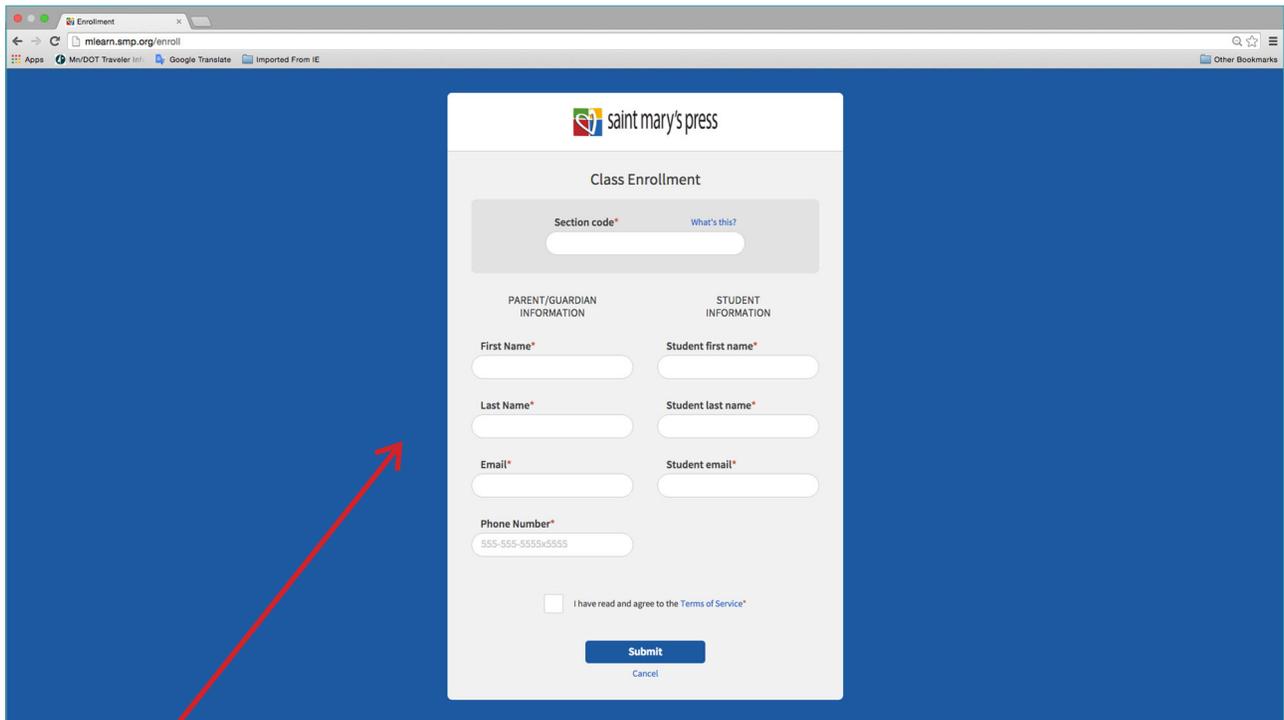


These songs are embedded as music videos in the *Called to Mercy* learning modules, as a method of prayerful reflection. They are also used throughout the gathered sessions and retreat. If a young person loves the music and wants to add it to a personal playlist or music collection, he or she can find all the songs at MissionEighty5 Music, [www.mission85music.com](http://www.mission85music.com). The songs are also available for purchase or streaming through the most popular sites on the web, such as iTunes, Spotify, Amazon Music, Google Play, YouTube Music, KKBOX, and Pandora.

As the program director, you will receive a free digital download of all the songs. You are free to load these songs onto any device, and you are granted permission to play them at any of your gathered sessions. In fact, the gathered session plans, retreat plan, and service-day plan all call for one or more of the songs to be played either as background music or as part of a reflection exercise.

We hope you love the power and beauty of these songs and use them as another way to inspire young people with the message of mercy.

# When the Young People Log in for the First Time

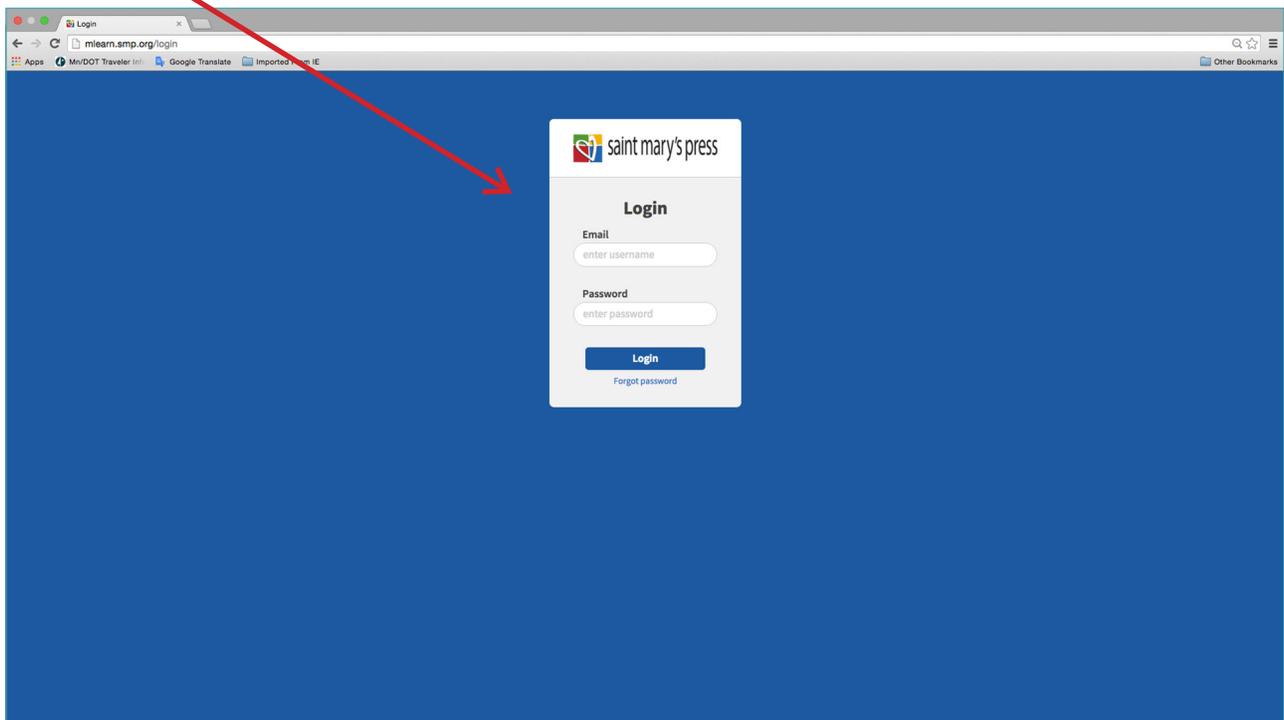


The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL [mlearn.smp.org/enroll](http://mlearn.smp.org/enroll). The page features the Saint Mary's Press logo and a "Class Enrollment" form. The form includes a "Section code\*" field with a "What's this?" link. Below this, the form is divided into two columns: "PARENT/GUARDIAN INFORMATION" and "STUDENT INFORMATION". The parent/guardian section has fields for "First Name\*", "Last Name\*", "Email\*", and "Phone Number\*" (with a placeholder "555-555-5555x5555"). The student section has fields for "Student first name\*", "Student last name\*", and "Student email\*". At the bottom, there is a checkbox for "I have read and agree to the Terms of Service\*" and two buttons: "Submit" and "Cancel". A red arrow points from the bottom left towards the "Section code\*" field.

**Step 1:** The students will receive an access code from you to register for their section. The students will go to [mlearn.smp.org/enroll](http://mlearn.smp.org/enroll) and enter the access code to enroll.

**Step 2:** Once the students have enrolled, they will receive a confirmation e-mail and be asked to reset their password.

**Step 3:** Once their password is reset, they will be taken to [mlearn.smp.org](http://mlearn.smp.org) to log in and begin the course!



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL [mlearn.smp.org/login](http://mlearn.smp.org/login). The page features the Saint Mary's Press logo and a "Login" form. The form has two input fields: "Email" with the placeholder "enter username" and "Password" with the placeholder "enter password". Below the fields are a "Login" button and a "Forgot password" link. A red arrow points from the bottom left towards the "Email" field.

# The Online Learning Modules

## Module 1: Nice to Meet You!

This introductory module allows the young people to become familiar with how to navigate through a learning module. It also allows them to create a personal profile that expresses their unique talents, attitudes, values, and activities and guides them through selecting a favorite quote and six words to describe themselves. Their profile can be seen by other young people in their “section.” In this module, the young people also meet Bishop Frank Caggiano in a light-hearted fashion. Bishop Frank offers the “catechesis” in each module. Finally, the young people reflect on the important relationships in their life as a foundation for meaning, and the module closes with prayerful reflection on the importance of a posture of gratitude.

## Module 2: True Happiness

God desires our joy and happiness, but happiness (the kind God desires for us) is often confused with the world’s sense of pleasure. This module leads the young people through a discernment and clarification process to arrive at the meaning of true happiness. They are introduced to Pope Francis’s Top Ten Secrets to Happiness, and they reflect on the one they most desire to further incorporate in their own life. Bishop Frank introduces the young people to the teaching “God is Love” and that love is the source and foundation of true happiness. The young people are invited to consider where love is most needed in the world today, and Bishop Frank expands their reflection by inviting them to consider how love is most needed “in the shadows of society” and how we are called as missionary disciples to bring love to those most in need. The young people are further invited to consider how their Confirmation is a calling to be witnesses of God’s love in the world. The module closes with prayerful reflection on the amazing Grace of God.

## Module 3: The Gift of Happiness

True happiness comes at a price, and it requires courage to seek it and sustain it. Loving the way God desires us to love is not always easy, but it is a gift worth the commitment. In this module, the young people explore how choosing the path of true happiness takes courage, strength, and resolve. The young people discover that the Gifts of the Spirit are actually foundations for a life of happiness. The young people are then invited to explore more deeply with Bishop Frank the places in our society where profound brokenness and injustice exist and to consider how they are called to bring the gift of happiness to others, especially those most in need. To support that invitation, the young people are led through a discernment of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit to then consider which gifts they most need strengthened in their own life. The module closes with prayerful reflection on what it means to allow the Holy Spirit, as Pope Francis says, to “draw us into this missionary dynamism, awakening within us the desire, the joy and the courage to offer our own lives in the service of the Kingdom of God” (“Message for the 52nd World Day of Prayer for Vocations”).

## Module 4: Doing What We Believe

Bishop Frank opens this module by sharing the story of his own Confirmation preparation when Sr. Thomas Bridget impressed upon him the importance of doing what you believe. The module leads the young people to explore inspirational stories of peers around the world who are putting into practice their belief through acts of mercy. Then, through the stories of Jesus in Scripture, the young people explore the fruits of the Holy Spirit as the signs of, and witness to, doing what you believe. They are invited to consider adults in their lives who inspire them by the way their lives manifest the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Rooted in this sense of inspiration and admiration of people who they experience as models of “doing what you believe,” they are led to discern their own Confirmation sponsor. The module closes with prayerful reflection on what most challenges the young people in their own practice of “doing what you believe” and a prayer for God’s guidance and help. Before completing the module, the young people submit to the Confirmation coordinator the name of their Confirmation sponsor.

## Module 5: Guides along the Way

Selecting a saint name is a long-standing tradition of Confirmation. What is the significance of this practice, and how can it become an opportunity to deepen one's connection with a spiritual life and commitment to mercy? This module leads the young people into an exploration of the life of Jesus and his works of mercy and then into an inspirational contemplation on the lives of great spiritual women and men, particularly those canonized by the Church as models of the Church's mission of giving witness to mercy. Bishop Frank invites the young people to consider saints not as lofty models of unattainable holiness but as our friends. After choosing a saint's life to research more deeply, the young people are invited to consider the conversation they would have with that saint if they were to sit down with her or him today. The young people then enter a process of discerning a saint for Confirmation who can serve as a spiritual friend and guide in their life. The module closes with prayerful reflection on the call to each of us to live saintly lives on earth, to be people of scandalous mercy for the healing of the world.

## Module 6: When We Hurt

There are times when we fall short of acting with love; fall short of following the path of "doing what we believe." And there are times when others fall short in treating us with love, times when we hurt one another through our words and our actions. This module begins by inviting the young people to consider times when they have been hurt by another and to consider how easy or hard it can be to forgive. They hear several powerful stories of forgiveness and then consider the question, Could I forgive like this? They also explore the ways in which they and their peers fall short of acting with love and mercy in their ordinary, daily life. Considering the reality of sin in this light, the young people are invited to explore what a response of love looks like—forgiving unconditionally, as God does—in order to see that love restores brokenness, hurt, sorrow, and sinful action. Bishop Frank invites the young people to consider practical things they can do in this moment to heal the hurt of someone they know. The module closes with prayerful reflection on our call to forgiveness and reflection on the

unconditional love and forgiveness of God, who loves and forgives us despite our brokenness and failings. The ultimate questions for reflection are these: Can we love? Can we forgive one another like this?

## Module 7: What's It All About?

Love confirms human dignity. In this module, the young people are first led to consider for themselves the meaning of the term human dignity by exploring ways in which human dignity is diminished. They then enter the story of the Great Commandment and Jesus' call to mercy as the action that builds up and restores human dignity. Bishop Frank invites the young people to understand how "love helps a person to realize the dignity they already have" and that love is not something to be earned. We are born with dignity. Why? Because we are made in the image and likeness of God. The module closes with prayerful reflection on our call to see where the dignity of others is being diminished and our call to be people of love who helps others "realize the dignity they already have." The young people are asked to consider this question: Tomorrow, when you encounter someone in need of tenderness and mercy, what do you hope you will do in response?

## Module 8: It's Me and We

Do I really need to be part of a community, the Church, to follow the call of mercy? Many, if not most, young people (and not-so-young people) ask this question at some point in their life. This module allows the young people to explore this question by considering first the ways in which they already live all aspects of their lives as part of a team, a group, or a community. They explore models of the Church that expand their childhood notion of the Church as just a place where we go to Mass, arriving at a broader, more mature vision of the Church. Bishop Frank tackles the question and explores the idea of what it means when we ask, Am I more spiritual or more religious?—a common wonderment of young people. Ultimately, Bishop Frank leads the young people to think about that question in a new way and to think about how the community of the Church can support the authentic spiritual search for God. The young people are then led to consider not only how they

need the Church but also how the Church needs them to fulfill its mission of being a witness and sacrament in the world. The module closes with prayerful reflection on the young people's call as individuals and as members of a community of believers—the Church—to be confirmed in, and strengthened by, God's love and to give witness to God's love.

## Module 9: Beyond These Walls

The words of Pope Francis open this module: “. . . Our duty is to make this world a better place, and to fight. Our faith is revolutionary because of the inspiration that comes from the Holy Spirit” (Address to the National Ecclesial Congress, 2015). Bishop Frank sets the stage for this introspective and reflective module as he calls the young people to see that the Church nourishes them for one purpose: to leave the four walls of the Church, to go out and change the world by giving witness to God's love and mercy. The young people are presented the inspirational challenge of Pope Saint John Paul II to do one simple thing each day to make the world a better place. They are then invited to name one simple thing they will commit to doing right now as a first step. The young people explore stories of inspirational people who have taken up the call to mercy in profound and beautiful ways and are introduced to a young boy, Lucas Hobbs, who at the age of 12, while enduring treatment for cancer, was granted his Make-A-Wish Foundation request—to give back to those who show mercy to others every day of their lives. As *Called to Mercy* comes to a close, the young people, in light of all their learning and contemplation, are asked to consider one last question: If you were to take up one cause to make the world a better place, what would that cause be and what would you do? The young people are invited to share stories of their

peers who are doing amazing things to make the world a better place. Saint Mary's Press will choose a winner, someone with a particularly inspiring story of mercy, to receive a \$1,000 gift each year. Bishop Frank offers a final word of encouragement as he reminds the young people that even the things we do with the best of intentions that don't work out still give glory to God because we tried. The module closes with prayerful reflection on Confirmation not as graduation but as the full initiation into a life of mercy for the betterment of the world.

## Module 10: Confirmed to Witness Mercy

The Order of Confirmation concludes with this Prayer of the People:

Confirm, O God,  
 what you have brought about in us,  
 and preserve in the hearts of your faithful  
 the gifts of the Holy Spirit;  
 may they never be ashamed  
 to confess Christ crucified before the world  
 and by devoted charity  
 may they ever fulfill his commands.  
 Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.  
 Amen.

*(Order of Confirmation, 33)*

This module leads the young people through the Order of Confirmation, highlighting and shedding light on the significant moments in the Order that tie into the call to merciful lives that they have explored through their preparation. The module is in part summative and introductory, allowing the young people to become familiar with the movement, words, actions, and language of the Order of Confirmation so that on the day of their Confirmation the liturgy may take on greater meaning and significance.

## Five Gathered Sessions

Complete and detailed plans for each of the gathered sessions are available online for download within the course and in the Saint Mary's Press Online Resource Center, at [www.smp.org/resourcencenter](http://www.smp.org/resourcencenter).

### Gathered Session 1: Parent/Guardian and Young Person Introductory Session

This 60-minute introductory session is for parents/guardians and the young people enrolled in *Called to Mercy*. It provides them an overview of the program, how it works, what they will need to participate, and a calendar of dates for completion of online learning modules and dates of the gathered sessions, including the retreat (if you plan to offer one). The leader provides the participants with a unique access code that they will use to log in to the *Called to Mercy* site, at [mlearn.smp.org](http://mlearn.smp.org).

### Gathered Session 2: Called to Serve

This 90-minute session is ideally scheduled three to four months prior to your planned community-service day. We recommend that this gathered session take place after all the young people complete online learning module 3 and before they begin learning module 4. The primary outcome of this gathered session is to choose a particular work of mercy that the Confirmation class will engage in through a communal day of service. The reason this session takes place early in the program is to allow sufficient time for you and/or the young people to plan and organize the day of service.

### Gathered Session 3: Putting into Practice

This 90-minute session is recommended to be scheduled after the young people complete online learning module 5 and not later than completion of module 6. This gathered session provides an opportunity for community building and for the young people, in small groups, to dive deeper into their reflections from the online learning modules, particularly to reflect further on the call and challenges of “doing what you believe” in their day-to-day life.

### Gathered Session 4: Service Day

This all-day communal service session is a way for the young people, as part of the whole Confirmation class, to do a concrete act of mercy in their local community through service. The projects that the young people engage in are those that they helped brainstorm and select during gathered session 2.

### Gathered Session 5: Mystagogia

This 45-minute session is an opportunity to gather briefly with the young people following their Confirmation to process their experience. The session also invites the young people to consider what's next for them and how they wish to stay connected to the community and committed to a life of mercy.

## Retreat

This is a full-day retreat, with an overnight option, that is specifically designed to help the young people enter a more contemplative and reflective period, free of day-to-day distractions and busyness. The retreat focuses on the theme of mercy and allows the young people to explore their own stories of encounters of mercy in their lives—when they have experienced mercy and when they have not. The young people are led in a process of writing a story of desire for their own life, imagining how they desire to live a life rooted in, and giving witness to, mercy. As they consider how this might look for them, they are invited to reflect on the stories of Jesus, spiritual guides, and the saints, as well as the call of the Church.

# How the Online Learning Modules, Gathered Sessions, and Retreat Integrate and Flow



## Meet the Guides

As the young people begin, they will meet three guides who will lead them through the modules. Let's meet the guides now!



HI, I'M KAREN!



HI, I'M LAUREN!



HI, I'M SHAWN!



We are the guides who will accompany and lead your young people through the online learning modules.

In the first learning module, we will introduce ourselves more and lead your young people in a process of introducing themselves to the community. They will encounter us throughout the program in short videos as well as through written dialogue that looks like text messages.



We aren't really "live" guides. We are real people in real life—we actually exist—but we don't interact with the young people in your program in a live way; rather, we guide them virtually, through pre-recorded videos and scripts that we wrote for them for each module.

Our job is to help them navigate through each learning module.



We set the tone and direction for each module, and we share our thoughts and insights and invite the young people to do the same in each module. We also summarize things and explain the teachings of the Church that are explored in each module.

We have had a blast preparing all of our interactions for this program, and we hope *Called to Mercy* is an amazing journey for you and your young people.



We'll see them at the start of learning module 1!



Hey, don't forget about me! Along with the Karen, Lauren, and Shawn, I will appear in the dialogue with your young people. I'm T. H. Smith, and I represent the voice of the Holy Spirit. I too help shed light on and clarify the teachings of Jesus and the Church.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the role of the director?

The director is the person who oversees the whole of the program. The director has full access to the parish's administrative site for *Called to Mercy*, allowing him or her to enroll young people, remove young people, access section codes to provide to the young people, move young people to different sections, and manage the program overall. The director also makes sure the retreat, service day, and gathered sessions are planned and organized well in advance and implemented successfully.

### Do I need catechists?

In short, no, there is no need for catechists. The online learning modules are all complete and self-contained and do not require catechists to lead or direct them. However, you will need various leaders to assist with small-group discussion and planning and implementing the retreat, service day, and gathered sessions. A detailed listing of the leader needs can be found in the plans for each of these sessions.

### What is the role of the sponsor?

In module 4, the young people are led through a process to discern who might serve as their Confirmation sponsor. They are directed to invite that person to serve as their sponsor and to submit their sponsor name to the Confirmation program director.

### What devices do the young people or their families need?

Access to the online learning modules requires a device with an Internet connection. The application was designed to work on just about any device that can connect to the web, including smartphones, tablets, iPads, laptops, and desktop computers. The access code assigned to your parish is needed to log in.

### How do the young people connect to the rest of the group?

There are two primary ways the young people connect to the group through the program. First, each online learning module has some sort of activity that allows the young people to see the

responses and posts of others in the program. Second, the young people gather face-to-face five times throughout the course of the program: at the retreat, on the service day, and at the gathered community-building sessions.

We have taken great care to ensure that the sharing and posting functions in the online learning modules comply with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA). No personal information of the users is solicited, posted, or shared as part of the program. Although the program is accessed through a website, only individuals enrolled in your parish program (young people and anyone assigned administrative rights) can access posted and shared content. The program does not allow users to chat or converse with other users online. Many of the post functions are anonymous and show the aggregate responses, not individual responses.

### What if a young person posts something inappropriate?

There are two safeguards for this. First, there is a "flag" feature on all posts. If users see a post that they feel is inappropriate, they can flag it. The program director or anyone assigned administrative rights will be notified that content has been flagged and can then review the content and delete it if necessary.

### How do the gathered sessions and online learning modules relate?

The program has ten online learning modules that the young people complete in order. The face-to-face gathered sessions are scheduled to take place at specific times in the sequence of the learning modules. The retreat builds upon the content from learning modules 1 and 2, for instance. This is the case with all of the gathered sessions; they build upon the online learning module content. At the parent/guardian and young person introductory session, you will want to provide dates by which each of the online learning modules is to be completed. For example, if the retreat is scheduled for October 15, you will want to direct the young people to have online learning modules 1 and 2 complete by that date.

## How are the young people held accountable for completing the online learning modules?

The program director and others assigned administrative rights can track the completion record of each young person. Those with administrative rights are able to see if a module has been completed and can also see anything a young person has posted or shared as part of each module. The director may wish to send periodic reminders to the young people of dates by which they are to have certain modules completed.

## How is the program paced? How long does it take for a young person to complete a module?

The beauty of online learning is that the young people can complete the modules at their own pace, whenever they wish, as long as they complete them by the assigned due dates. They can begin a module, leave it, and come back to complete it at a later time. Any work done before logging out is always saved. The length of time it takes to work through any given module will vary, but on average a young person can complete one in 20 to 35 minutes.

## How are the young people grouped and organized? Does this differ if a parish has 10 or 150 candidates?

You have the option to set up your program with all of the young people enrolled in one “section” or to organize them into distinct and separate “sections.” If you choose to organize the young people into multiple sections, you can also assign a unique “administrator” to each section. The gathered sessions, including the retreat, service day, and community-building sessions, are designed to be large-group gatherings of all the young people enrolled in the program.

## How is the program ordered? Does the parish pay, or does each young person pay?

To order the program and to complete the registration, call our Customer Care Team at 800-533-8095. They will set up an account for you and

provide you a unique program access code for your parish. You will then distribute that access code to each young person in the program who can use it to log in and begin the program.

We can help you set up the program so that either the parish pays for all the young people enrolled or each young person (or parent/guardian) pays for the program individually. If your young people will be paying individually, they will pay by credit card through an automated secure process when they first log in, using the access code you provide them. The system is designed to know whether an individual needs to pay or if the parish has already paid for access.

## What about traditional elements (diocesan-required) like saint reports, letters to the bishop, retreats, and service projects?

Because there are so many different practices across the country, from diocese to diocese, this program has been designed to incorporate the most common practices and elements of Confirmation preparation. The program does include, in module 5, research and selection of a saint name. A Confirmation retreat plan is designed to occur toward the beginning of the program, between the completion of online learning modules 2 and 3. A service-day plan is scheduled for late in the program, between online learning modules 9 and 10.

## What if something is not working on the website or if a young person is having trouble logging in?

Support service for any problem you encounter is available by calling our Customer Care Team at 800-533-8095, Monday through Friday, between 7:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. CST. We would be delighted to assist you or your young people.

## Acknowledgments

The quotes from Pope Francis’s homily on the Year of Mercy, March 13, 2015, on pages 3 and 5, can be found at [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2015/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150313\\_omelia-liturgia-penitenziale.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150313_omelia-liturgia-penitenziale.html). Copyright © Libreria Editrice Vaticana (LEV).

The quotes from Pope Francis’s homily on March 17, 2013, on pages 3 and 4, can be found at [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130317\\_omelia-santa-anna.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130317_omelia-santa-anna.html). Copyright © LEV.

The quote by Pope Francis on page 12 is from “Message of Pope Francis for the 52nd World Day of Prayer for Vocations,” April 26, 2015, at [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/vocations/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150329\\_52-messaggio-giornata-mondiale-vocazioni.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/vocations/documents/papa-francesco_20150329_52-messaggio-giornata-mondiale-vocazioni.html). Copyright © LEV.

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