

THE CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION FOR THOSE UNDER THE AGE OF 18

PREAMBLE

The sacrament of Confirmation strengthens the baptized and obliges them more firmly to be witnesses of Christ by word and deed and to spread and defend the faith. It imprints a character, enriches by the gifts of the Holy Spirit the baptized continuing on the path of Christian initiation, and binds them more perfectly to the Church. (CCL #879)

Confirmation is not an optional sacrament. This sacrament is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace. Every effort should be made in order for every child of appropriate age to receive this sacrament and complete initiation. It is an important step in a Christian's faith journey that stresses commitment, knowledge, freedom, and active participation.

Through Baptism a person is *incorporated* into Christ and the Church. The baptized is configured to Christ and given an indelible spiritual character of his or her belonging to Christ. This character, or mark, can never be erased. Baptism makes a person a member of the Church and enables and commits them to serve God by participating in the Church, especially in the liturgy.

Confirmation is a sacrament that gives a new and special outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the baptized, in the same way that the Spirit once came to the apostles at Pentecost. Confirmation "completes" Baptism in that it, too, imprints an indelible mark on the soul. Confirmation brings about an increase and deepening of baptismal grace.

The following *Guidelines for The Celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation for Those Under the Age of 18*, are intended to help guide Pastors, parish staff and families through the preparation process. The Guidelines are divided into the following six sections: Policies, Catechesis, Discernment of Readiness, Post-Confirmation Mystagogy, Records, and Special Consideration.

POLICIES

1. At least one parent/guardian should be a Catholic who practices the faith in the parish where he/she resides or is registered and attend Sunday Mass each week.
2. Parent/Guardian must provide a copy of the candidate's Baptismal certificate if baptized in a Parish other than the one in which he/she will receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.
3. If a candidate wishes to be confirmed in a parish other than the one in which he/she resides or is registered, a letter of permission from the proper pastor/parish director must be issued.
4. Candidates are expected to be confirmed in the 8th grade if the parish celebrates the sacrament on an annual basis. If a parish celebrates the sacrament on a bi-annual basis, it is acceptable to combine the 7th and 8th grade.
5. It is expected that all Catholic children take part in Religious Education from 1st grade through 12th grade. It is required that candidates attend Religious Education for two (2) years immediately prior to the reception of the Confirmation. This catechetical instruction may be done in a full time Catholic school, or parish based program, or homeschool program.
6. In addition to catechetical preparation (see #5 above), Candidates must also participate in the other preparation for the reception of Confirmation in which candidates from the Catholic schools, home schooling community and parish catechetical ministry programs are united. They must participate in its communal dimensions (service projects, spiritual retreats, youth ministry activities, etc.) and any other requirements determined by the parish.
7. To receive confirmation licitly outside the danger of death requires that a person who has the use of reason be suitable instructed, properly disposed, and able to renew their baptismal promises. (CCL #889.2)
8. As the primary educators of their child, the parents/guardians have the first and most important influence on the faith development of their child. The best and most fruitful catechesis for the reception of Confirmation must involve parent/guardian. Parishes must provide catechesis for parent/guardian and sponsors regarding Confirmation before the celebration of Confirmation.

9. Candidates must choose a suitable sponsor who will accompany them and meet the following requirements:
- Have been chosen by the candidate personally and have a significant relationship with the candidate
 - Have attained the age of sixteen (16) unless special circumstances are approved by clergy
 - Be a fully initiated, confirmed, practicing Catholic participating in Sunday liturgy, leading a life of strong moral character and faith and not bound by any canonical penalty
 - Is not the mother or father of the candidate¹

Canon law states that it is preferable that the Confirmation sponsor be the baptismal sponsor so the link between Baptism and Confirmation is clearly defined.²

¹ CCL #874

RCIA #10 – Sponsors are persons who have known and assisted the candidates and stand as witnesses to the candidates' moral character, faith and intention.

² *CCL # 893.2* – It is desirable that the one who undertook the role of sponsor at the Baptism be sponsor for Confirmation.

Catechesis for the Sacrament of Confirmation

- A. Catechesis for Confirmation is to follow the teaching of the Sacrament of Confirmation from the Catechism of the Catholic Church. (reference CCC Article 2 – 1285 through 1321)
- B. Catechesis for the candidates must be taken from a text that has been found to be in doctrinal compliance with the Catechism of the Catholic Church by the Bishops' Ad Hoc Committee on Catechism.
- C. As the primary educator of their child, the parent/guardian has the first and most important influence on the faith development of their child. It is very important that the parent/guardian meet the parishes' requirement for involvement in this process of preparation. They are expected to participate in those catechetical programs offered by the parish to help them grow in their own understanding and appreciation of the sacrament of Confirmation so they can guide their child into fuller participation in the life and worship of the Christian community.³
- D. Special considerations and adaptation must be made for those candidates with disabilities. Contact the Office of Total Catholic Education should you need resource assistance.

³ CCL #914, part 1: It is the responsibility, in the first place, of parents and those who take the place of parents, as well as the pastor, to see that the children who have reached the use of reason are correctly prepared.

Readiness to Receive the Sacrament of Confirmation

- A. Parent/guardian and catechists are expected to foster the child's desire and readiness to receive the sacrament of Confirmation.
- B. Candidates are expected to participate in Sunday Mass and regularly receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation in order to manifest the desire to live a Catholic life.
- C. It is the responsibility of the candidates Pastor, in collaboration with the parent/guardian, program director and catechist, to insure that the candidate who has reached the age and/or use of reason is properly prepared and disposed.⁴ It is the responsibility of the pastor or his delegate to meet individually with each candidate during the formation process to determine readiness for the sacrament.

Post-Confirmation Mystagogy

- A. There is an expectation that the pastor or his delegate provides opportunities for the newly confirmed to reflect more deeply on the meaning of their Confirmation.
- B. Lifelong faith formation and conversion is expected to continue following Confirmation. The newly confirmed is expected to continue their participation in parish youth ministry programs, liturgy, service opportunities and all other parish community life.⁵

RECORDS

The names of those candidates who received the sacrament of Confirmation, the celebrant, sponsor(s), parents, place and date of the ceremony are to be recorded in the Confirmation register of the parish where Confirmation takes place. This information must be sent to the Confirmands' church of Baptism.⁶

⁴ CCL #843, part 2: Pastors of souls and other members of the Christian faithful, according to their respective ecclesiastical function, have the duty to take care that those who seek the sacraments are prepared to receive them by proper evangelization and catechetical instruction, attentive to the norms issued by competent authority.

⁵ GDC #69 – Continuing or ongoing education in the faith follows upon basic education and presupposes it. Both fulfill two distinct but complimentary functions of the ministry of the word while serving the process of continuing conversion. Initiatory catechesis lays the basis for the Christian life of the followers of Jesus. The process of continuing conversion goes beyond what is provided by basic catechesis.

Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us #13 – Such lifelong formation is always needed and must be a priority in the Church's catechetical ministry; moreover, it must "be considered the chief form of catechesis. All the other forms, which are indeed always necessary, are in some way oriented to it."

⁶ CCL #895 – The names of the confirmed with mention of the minister, the parents and the sponsors, the place and date of the conferral of confirmation are to be noted in the confirmation register in the diocesan curia, or, where the conference of bishops or the diocesan bishop has prescribed it, in a book kept in the parish archives; the pastor must advise the pastor of the place of baptism about each conferral of confirmation so that notation be made in the baptismal register, in accord with the norm of Can. 535.2.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

A. Celebration of Confirmation for candidates with disabilities

In compliance with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, we should always strive to make the sacraments of the Church accessible to persons with disabilities. Parish sacramental celebrations should be accessible to persons with disabilities and open to their full, active and conscious participation according to their capacity.

B. Home Schooled Children

The candidates pastor must see to it that proper catechetical instruction for the child is provided. The rights and responsibilities of parent/guardian and the parish call for collaboration between the two. The same policies apply to candidates who are home schooled for religious education as are required for children in parish programs and Catholic schools. It is expected that home schooled candidates receiving catechesis in the home be involved with all the communal aspects of the parish (i.e.: service projects, retreats, youth ministry activities, etc) that are prescribed for the preparation of the sacrament.

C. Special Circumstances

Every year most parish programs are faced with the enrollment of children, Catholic and non-Catholic, catechized and un-catechized, who are not in sequence with the norms of our Diocese. Determination of where these students belong in a specific program/process must be made on an individual basis through an interview process that may include the family, pastor or sacramental minister and program coordinator.


Catholic Families

- a. Baptized Catholic Children who relocate from other dioceses where reception of Confirmation is scheduled differently and who have been participating in a systematic, approved religious education program and who are catechized to age/grade level, should be prepared to receive this sacrament in as timely a manner as possible.
- b. Baptized Catholic Children who are not catechized to age/grade level need to minimally fulfill the prerequisite of a year of approved catechesis before starting a sacramental preparation program. Special consideration should be given to the families of these children, as the parents/guardians also have need of catechesis.⁷

⁷ N.B. – Parishes catechizing baptized Catholic children over the age of seven may include those children in an RCIA process for catechesis. They may receive their First Holy Communion at the Easter Vigil, but they should not be confirmed.

- c. Un-baptized children, from either Catholic or non-Catholic families, or baptized non-Catholic children, over the age of seven should participate in an RCIA/RCIC process. After completing this process, they should be fully initiated into the Church through Baptism/Profession of Faith, Eucharist and Confirmation.

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**Bibliography of References used
For the Policies for Confirmation with Children**

<i>CCL</i>	The Code of Canon Law
<i>CCC</i>	Catechism of the Catholic Church
<i>DMC</i>	The Directory for Masses with Children
<i>GDC</i>	The General Directory for Catechesis
<i>GIRM</i>	General Instruction of the Roman Missal
<i>NDC</i>	National Directory for Catechesis
	Were Not Our Hearts Burning Within Us
	Send Out Your Spirit

Sacrament of Confirmation

FAQ'S

- 1.) **A child is attending Catholic school and receiving sacramental preparation in class. Where should that child receive the sacrament?** It is preferable that the candidate receive the sacrament at the parish where the family worships. Since this is a communal celebration, the sacrament should be celebrated with the faith community in which the family worships and is registered. If the family desires for the candidate to be confirmed with his class at the parish where the school is located the candidate's family should request that the proper pastor write a letter to the pastor where the school is located and acknowledge the request that the candidate receive confirmation at the parish where the Catholic school is located. This permission does not excuse a candidate from participating in the communal confirmation activities (retreats, service projects, youth ministry activities etc.) at the candidates parish.
- 2.) **Does a child that attends Catholic school (and is receiving religious education) also need to be enrolled in parish preparation?** No. However, it is expected that the candidate participates in the other aspects of preparation at their parish (i.e: parish service projects, prayer services, youth ministry programs, parish ministries, etc.)
- 3.) **In what grade should the sacrament be received?** Candidates will be confirmed in the 8th grade. The exception to this would for candidates who belong to parishes that have Confirmation every other year due to class size and availability for instruction (primarily those parishes in the mountains and plains).
- 4.) **Is Confirmation preparation a one or two year process?** It is expected that every Catholic child will participate in religious education from 1st grade through 12th grade. It is required that all confirmation candidates participate in religious education the year before and the year in which the young person is confirmed.
- 5.) **What if a family requests the Sacrament of Confirmation for a child that is younger than the 8th grade? Does approval need to be obtained by the Bishop?** It is expected that the candidate be confirmed in the 8th grade. The family would need to meet with the parish pastor and discuss the reason for the desire for the candidate to be confirmed before the 8th grade. If after the parish pastor has ensured that the candidate has been properly prepared and the candidate has reached the age of reason (at least seven years of age), and the pastor gives permission, then they may be confirmed. Families do not need to obtain the permission of the Bishop as the pastor is the one to make that determination.