

**RITE OF CONFIRMATION** (Liturgical Guidelines)

The confirmation liturgy marks one stage of initiation and celebrates the candidates' gradual and continuing growth into the Eucharistic community. Confirmation is most appropriately celebrated in the context of the Eucharist. This is not a "graduation" ceremony but growth in the baptismal way of life which is meant to lead us all into the Eucharistic way of life through all our days. What is "sealed" through this liturgy is the gift of the Spirit, poured out first through baptism. We celebrate, seal, bless, and make explicit the presence of Christ's Spirit in our midst, our common baptismal life.

The following moments of the liturgy are to be carefully prepared.

1. The procession of ministers, candidates, and elements of the celebration.
  - a. Cross bearer and servers with candles or Easter Candle (optional).
  - b. Water for sprinkling rite.
  - c. Candidates (and sponsors -- optional).
  - d. Chrism.
  - e. Lectionary or Book of Gospels.
  - f. Bishop accompanied by pastor.
2. The sprinkling rite which replaces the penitential rite.
3. Liturgy of the Word.
4. The Rite of Confirmation with 6 major actions:
  - a. Presentation of the candidates.
  - b. Homily of instruction.
  - c. Renewal of baptismal promises.
  - d. Laying on of hands.
  - e. Anointing with chrism.
  - f. General intercessions.

**I. Elements of Celebration**

The symbols of the confirmation liturgy are drawn from baptism and Pentecost, the "water and the spirit" history of the Church. Obvious, full, uncluttered, visible, simple use and attention are to be given to them.

- A. Water is used to evoke baptism. Prepare for the sprinkling rite in place of the penitential rite to remind everyone that "it all begins with baptism". If your church has a font and baptismal area, make this the starting point of the sprinkling rite. If the baptismal font is not easily accessible, then include a sizable and beautiful container of water in the entrance procession. Prepare a simple setting with table or stand for this container where it can have a prominent place. The water, Easter candle, and chrism may be grouped together.
- B. Chrism is a mixture of oil and perfumes. It is blessed by the bishop at the Chrism Mass celebrated in the Cathedral usually during Holy Week or on a day convenient for the gathering of the priests and deacons as close to Holy Thursday as possible.

Consider bringing those preparing for confirmation to the Cathedral for the Chrism Mass to experience their communion to the larger church and to better understand the significance of the Oil of Chrism.

Bishop brings the chrism with him in a small vessel. Prepare a small tray draped with a pretty cloth on which to carry it in the entrance procession. Prepare a prominent place to set the chrism in the sanctuary area.

- C. Easter Candle. (optional) Depending on its size the candle may both be carried in the procession and then placed near the water and chrism or it may be left in place with plants and flowers around the base and burning brightly.

## II. Liturgy of the Word

All the sacraments are celebrated in the context of a faith response to the good news of God's love. Thus in the rite the good news is first proclaimed and reflected upon. Then we express our response of faith by our sacramental actions. Planners need to spend time preparing the Liturgy of the Word. This includes not only selection of the scripture texts, psalms, and gospel acclamation, but also the careful preparation of the proclaimers and cantors.

Reading Selections: The readings of the day are always to be used when confirmation takes place on a Sunday or Saturday evening. On weekdays readings more appropriate to confirmation may be chosen. Please inform the bishop of selected readings at least a week before.

Psalm: The psalm and its refrain provide a reflection on the first reading. On weekdays the psalm may be either the one suggested for the day or one appropriate for confirmation. It is to be sung responsorially by a cantor with the congregation. If the psalm must be spoken, at least the refrain is to be sung. (Rite #'s 16-65)

Alleluia: Singing the gospel acclamation is of great significance. A verse may or may not be used. However, if the gospel acclamation is used (alleluia except during Lent), it is to be sung. If it cannot be sung, it is to be omitted. Alleluia is never to be recited. During Lent we substitute a seasonal gospel acclamation instead of the alleluia.

Lector: Choose the lector carefully. The person is to be competent, articulate, and have the ability to command attention. The lector should be a living witness to hearing the Word and putting it into practice. A candidate's parent or godparent, a catechist, one of the candidates, or a regular parish lector may be among the people considered for lector; however, one should keep in mind the criteria for properly proclaiming the Word. Prepare the lector carefully. Do not assume that everyone knows how to proclaim the Word. The lector should practice aloud with someone competent and fluent in the language in which the readings are being proclaimed.

### III. Movements and Gestures

- A. Presentation of the Candidate: It is appropriate to include the candidates with sponsors and parents in the entrance procession.

After the gospel reading the candidates are "each called by name." They are to stand at their place to emphasize the importance of the moment and remain standing so as to be the obvious focus of attention for the bishop and the entire assembly.

- B. Homily: The candidates are to be seated during the homily. The bishop likes to recognize the catechists at this time. Please have a list of their names prepared to give to the bishop at this point.

- C. Renewal of Baptismal Promises: All in the assembly stand with the candidates and renew their baptismal promises as a witness of faith and support to the candidates.

- D. Laying on of Hands: The imposition of hands evokes blessing, compassion, and unity. It denotes solemnity and consecration. It symbolizes God blessing the people and the objects involved in the ceremony. This may be done by hands being imposed upon each candidate individually. Usually, the bishop extends his hands over all the candidates at once in the following way.

1. The bishop invites all to invoke the Father to send the Spirit.
2. All join softly in a short refrain invoking the Holy Spirit; e.g. "Come Holy Spirit" or "Veni Sancti Spiritus." This may be led either by the bishop or the choir.
3. The bishop prays or sings the prayer of consecration.

- E. Anointing and Sign of Peace: The anointing with chrism is the gesture which speaks of service and discipleship. It is the mark of the kingdom. The container of chrism is brought from its place of prominence to the bishop. He takes a portion of it in a small bowl and begins the anointing. (When priests assist, they come to the bishop to receive a vessel of chrism from him). The anointing is to be deliberate and obvious; a generous portion of the perfumed oil is smeared on the candidate's forehead in the form of a cross with the words, "N., be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit." The oil is left on the forehead for all to see and smell.

Sponsors accompany the candidate, give the name of the candidate to the bishop and place their right hand on the right shoulder of the candidate.

The parents are also asked to come forward and stand to the side. The greeting of peace by the sponsor and the parents can take place on the side so as not to interrupt the movement of candidates to the bishop.

- F. Washing of Hands by Bishop: Prepare 1) a finger bowl with soapy water and wedges of lemon for the bishop to cleanse the oil from his hands, 2) a pitcher of water to rinse his hands, and 3) a towel. These are to be placed on a side table in the sanctuary area before the ceremony and brought to the bishop after the anointing with oil.

#### IV. Music

Music is to be chosen in the following order of priority with liturgical preference given to sung acclamations, responses, and antiphonal singing of the psalms.

- A. The Acclamations:  
 Alleluia  
 Holy, Holy  
 Memorial Acclamation  
 Amen

"These are shouts of joy which arise from the whole assembly as forceful and meaningful assents to God's Word and Action: They are important because they make some of the most significant moments of the Mass ... stand out." (Music in Catholic Worship, #53)

- B. Processional Songs:  
 Entrance or Gathering Song  
 Communion Song

"... are very important for creating and sustaining an awareness of community" (Music in Catholic Worship, #60).

- C. Responsorial Psalm:

"The liturgy of the Word comes more fully to life if between the first two readings a cantor sings the psalm and all sing the response" (Music in Catholic Worship, #63).

- D. Music within the Rite of Confirmation:

1. Song for rite of sprinkling.
2. A short song response after the renewal of baptismal promises. This is optional but recommended.
3. For the laying on of hands. The bishop invites all to a moment of silent prayer. Then either the bishop or the choir begins an acclamation of invocation to the Spirit. This is continued softly while the bishop prays or sings the prayer of consecration.
4. Music during the anointing. This can take place with musical accompaniment. A soft instrumental may enhance and intensify the actions.

- E. General Intercessions:

Singing this litany of prayer can add to the solemnity of the moment.

F. Ordinary Chants:

Glory to God  
Lord's Prayer  
Lamb of God

"One or more may be sung, the others spoken." (Music in Catholic Worship, #64)  
Please note that when the Sprinkling Rite is used the Lord Have Mercy is not sung.

G. Hymns:

The role of hymns is meant to be secondary. Recessional music may be instrumental. Music during the preparation of the altar and presentation of gifts may be instrumental or sung by a choir or special group.

V. Art and Environment

Keep whatever you do simple and avoid clutter. The rite designates three focal points that might be enhanced by some careful planning and interior decorations. These focal points are:

1. The gathering area for the candidates, sponsors, and parents.
2. The area of the baptismal font wherein the chrism may also be placed with prominence.
3. The altar.

Clearing out some of the decorations that collect throughout the year will allow for a more tasteful selection of banners, flowers, etc. If your church does not have a baptismal font in a prominent place, then arrange a setting for a large bowl of water and the holy Chrism. A small but sturdy table or stand that is tall enough to be seen is better than a large bulky piece of furniture. A simple covering; e.g., a linen table cloth, a serape, or other graceful cloth can add color and style. Flowers and/or green plants can be used to accent or highlight. A few flowers well arranged are better than a clutter of flowers and plants. Remember, too, that the arrangements are for a large assembly space and thus will be different, larger, bolder than arrangements used in small devotional areas.

A word of caution about banners. Their purpose is to serve and aid the action. "They are creations of form, colors, and textures, rather than signboards to which words must be attached. Their purpose is to appeal to the senses and thereby create an atmosphere and a mood, rather than impress a slogan upon the minds of observers or deliver a verbal message." (Environment and Art in Catholic Worship, #100)

Draw attention to the altar at the time when the altar will be used. This can be done effectively by leaving the altar bare during the Liturgy of the Word and the rite of confirmation. Then during the presentation of the gifts, have the various items needed for the altar brought forward and dress the altar with altar cloth, corporal, and candles which may be set either on or near the altar. Flowers may also be arranged

near the altar to help focus our attention on the altar and the action that is to take place there. Please note that since a cross is usually part of the sanctuary furnishings or the processional cross is standing near the altar, it is not proper to put another cross on the altar. The priest's chalice, the flagon of wine, and the vessel holding the hosts to be consecrated, along with the sacramentary, are the only items to go on the altar. The extra cups, finger towels, and water are to be placed on a side table and brought to the altar at the appropriate times.

It is not appropriate to present stoles to the candidates, as the stole is the official symbol of ordination, not confirmation.

Pictures are not to be taken during communion. It is the practice of the bishop to allow time after the ceremony for picture taking.

### Documentation

This sacrament is to be recorded in the parochial confirmation registry. Notification of the reception of this sacrament must be sent to the parish of baptism.

Prior to the arrival of the bishop for the confirmation liturgy, the following items need to be gathered, checked, and appropriately placed.

1. Bowl of water and branch for sprinkling rite.
2. Chrism (Bishop usually brings some with him.)  
Dish to pour chrism into for anointing.
3. Bowl with cut lemon or lemon juice in soapy water, pitcher of water and towel.
4. A setting in or near the sanctuary area for water, oil, paschal candle.
5. Hosts, enough so that all may receive the Eucharist from the hosts consecrated at this Mass.
6. Wine in decanter or flagon, enough for all to receive.
7. Chalice, pall, purificator on credence table.
8. Altar cloth and corporal on credence table.
9. Communion plates and communion cups as needed for communion stations on credence table.
10. Lectionary, sacramentary, ritual booklets.
11. Prayers of intercession.
12. Paschal candle, processional cross, processional candles.
13. Table in gathering space (foyer) for those items needed for the presentation of the gifts and preparation of the altar.
14. Credence table with communion plates, communion cups, water, and bowl for the washing of hands, finger towel, and small towels for communion cups. (Also see 7,8, and 9.)
15. Candles for, on, or near altar.