

# SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION



## POLICIES AND GUIDELINES For SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

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# THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

## INTRODUCTION

*Paul said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?"*

*They answered him, "We have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."*

*...they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.*

*And when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them,  
and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.*

Acts 19:2,5-6

## OVERVIEW

*Confirmation, together with Baptism and Eucharist, form the Sacraments of Initiation that are all intimately connected. In the Sacrament of Confirmation, the baptized person is "sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit" and is strengthened for service to the Body of Christ (U.S. Catechism for Adults, from chap. 16)*

## Scriptural History Of Confirmation

The Old Testament foretold that God's Spirit would rest upon the Messiah to affirm the validity of his mission. Jesus, the Messiah, fulfilled this prophecy when he was conceived by the Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. Jesus' mission began when the Holy Spirit descended on him at his baptism by John the Baptist. From that time he continued his mission in communion with the Spirit. The prophet Joel had prophesied that God would pour out a portion of his Spirit upon all flesh; before Jesus died he promised that the Spirit would be given to the Apostles and to the entire Church.

The New Testament reports many manifestations of the Holy Spirit after the Father, in the power of the Spirit, raised Jesus from the dead. John's Gospel describes an outpouring of the Spirit when Jesus breathed on the Apostles and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (Jn 20:22) and the Acts of the Apostles gives another account of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, fifty days after the Resurrection. Filled with the Holy Spirit, the Apostles proclaimed God's mighty deeds. They baptized believers in water. Then they imparted the special gift of the Spirit through the laying on of hands.

*The imposition of hands is rightly recognized by the Catholic tradition as the origin of the sacrament of Confirmation, which in a certain way perpetuates the grace of Pentecost in the Church (CCC, 1288, citing Pope Paul VI, Divinae Consortium Naturae, 659).*

## **The Effects of Confirmation:**

*Confirmation brings an increase and deepening of baptismal grace:*

- *It roots us more deeply in the divine filiation (becoming adopted sons and daughters of God) which makes us cry, "Abba! Father!"*
- *It unites us more firmly to Christ;*
- *It increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us;*
- *It renders our bond with the Church more perfect;*
- *It gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly, and never to be ashamed of the Cross (CCC, 1303)*

**Most quotes in this document are from the following sources.**

- National Directory for Catechesis (NDC)
- Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)
- Code of Canon Law (Canon)

# RESPONSIBILITIES OF THOSE INVOLVED

## CANDIDATES

### **POLICY**

Persons (adults and children who have reached the age of discretion – about seven years) who are NOT baptized must go through the RCIA process where they will be prepared to receive the Sacraments of Initiation...Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.

### **POLICY**

Even though the Sacrament of Confirmation can be received any time after the age of discretion, at the present time in the Diocese of Fairbanks, the age norm of confirmation for persons who are already baptized is about fifteen years. The candidate must:

- Be baptized
- Be Catholic (candidates baptized in another denomination must make a Profession of Faith)
- Be appropriately instructed and properly disposed.

If there is danger of death or if grave reason suggests otherwise, Confirmation can be conferred at any time by a priest.

### **GUIDELINES**

A candidate is ready to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation when the parents, sponsor, pastor or pastoral administrator and the catechist have discerned that the candidate:

- Participates actively, consciously and regularly at Sunday Eucharist or Sunday Celebrations (in the absence of a Priest).
- Has appreciation and awareness of the meaning of the sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist, and Reconciliation.
- Has attended the preparation classes on a regular basis.
- Has requested, preferably in writing, to receive the sacrament.
- Has chosen a Catholic sponsor who is living a Christian life and, like the baptismal godparent, represents the wider community.

*Those who have been baptized continue on the path of Christian initiation through the sacrament of Confirmation. In this sacrament they receive the Holy Spirit, whom the Lord sent upon the apostles at Pentecost. (Introduction, #1, the new Rite of Confirmation)*

## PARENTS

### **POLICY**

Parents are encouraged to be role models in the faith life of their teens preparing for Confirmation. Parents may present their teen for Confirmation, but they may not be a sponsor for their own child (see Canon 893 – §1; 874 – §1,5).

### **GUIDELINES**

Parents are encouraged to help their young teens by:

- Attending the parent and sponsor sessions.
- Modeling a Christian commitment of prayer, community worship, and service.
- Being committed to help the candidate meet the attendance and formation requirements for the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- Praying for the candidate as he/she goes through sacramental preparation.
- They may present their teen to the Bishop at the beginning of the Rite of Confirmation, themselves or with the sponsor, but they are not to be the sponsor.

## **SPONSORS**

### **POLICY**

The sponsor should be an active, sufficiently mature member of the faith community who has been initiated in the three sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist and who is not under a church penalty (see Canon 893 – §1 & §2; Canon 874 – §1,1,2,3,4,5).

### **GUIDELINES**

The sponsor is a role model in the faith, a companion on the candidate's faith journey, and a witness for the candidate before the Church.

- Must be designated by the candidate or the pastor or pastoral administrator, be qualified and be willing to fulfill this role.
- Must be at least sixteen years of age and have completed the initiation sacraments.
- May not be the father or mother of the one to be confirmed.
- The sponsor brings the candidate to receive the sacrament, presents him to the minister for the anointing, and will later help him to fulfill his baptismal promises faithfully under the influence of the Holy Spirit (Rite of Confirmation, Introduction #5).
- It is desirable that the sponsor for baptism, if available, also be the sponsor for Confirmation (Canon 893 – §2). This expresses more clearly the relationship between Baptism and Confirmation.
- If the sponsor is unknown to the pastor or catechist, it is necessary to obtain a letter or statement from the parish where the sponsor is a member, confirming that the sponsor is an active member in good standing in the parish and has completed the initiation sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.

## **CATECHISTS, PASTORS, PASTORAL ADMINISTRATORS**

### **POLICY**

The catechist is responsible to work with the parents, sponsors and pastor or pastoral administrator to prepare teen candidates for the sacrament of Confirmation. They must:

- Follow the diocesan policies and guidelines.
- Fulfill the ongoing requirements of the diocese for certified catechists.

Pastors and Pastoral Administrators are ultimately responsible to:

- Arrange a date for confirmation with the bishop six to nine months in advance.
- Ensure that the candidate receives proper evangelization and catechesis.
- Check with the candidate, parents and catechist as to the candidate's readiness.
- Determine that the diocesan policies and guidelines for this sacrament are observed.

### **GUIDELINES**

Sacramental religious educators are responsible to:

- Work together to plan sessions for parents, sponsors, and candidates on the study of Church and her mission, and the sacraments of initiation with particular emphasis on Confirmation.
- Provide adequate instruction and preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation appropriate for teenagers.
- Make every effort to involve the community in the sacramental preparation

## **COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITY**

### **POLICY**

The Catholic parish is the faith community into whose life of prayer and worship these candidates will be more fully initiated; it embodies the message to which the candidates are to respond and give witness. The community has an obligation to participate in the preparation of those to be confirmed by witnessing the preparatory rites of commitment, encouraging the candidates, and by being role models in the faith they profess.

## **SACRAMENTAL FORMATION**

### **CURRICULUM**

#### **POLICY**

The textbook used must be on the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB) list of textbooks in conformity with the Catechism of the Catholic Church and approved for use in the Diocese of Fairbanks.

- The Y-K Delta curriculum is approved for use in that region.

#### **GUIDELINES**

Consult the Diocesan Office of Religious Education about any textbooks that are not on the Fairbanks Diocese Approved Texts and Series List.

- Additional books and materials must be approved for use by the Diocesan Office of Religious Education.
- The curriculum must be appropriate to the age and ability of the candidate.

### **PLACE OF SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION**

#### **POLICY**

The Sacrament of Confirmation will be prepared for and celebrated in the parish.

- There must be a preparation process for Confirmation candidates in the parish in addition to any ongoing catechetical preparation that takes place in the home and/or the Catholic School.

### **CATECHESIS**

#### **POLICY**

*Preparation for Confirmation should aim at leading the Christian toward a more intimate union with Christ and a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit...his actions, his gifts, and his biddings...in order to be more capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities of Christian life. To this end catechesis for Confirmation should strive to awaken a sense of belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ, the universal Church as well as the parish community. The latter bears special responsibility for the preparation of confirmands (CCC, 1317).*

#### **GUIDELINES**

*Parishes should present catechesis for the Sacrament of Confirmation that:*

- *Teaches that Confirmation increases and deepens the grace of Baptism, imprinting an indelible character on the soul.*
- *Teaches that Confirmation strengthens the baptismal conferral of the Holy Spirit on those confirmed in order to incorporate them more firmly in Christ, strengthen their bond with the Church, associate them more closely with the Church's mission, increase in them the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and help them bear witness to the Christian faith in words and deeds.*
- *Teaches about the role of the Holy Spirit, his gifts, and his fruits.*
- *Is developmentally appropriate and includes retreat experiences.*

- *Includes instruction on the Rite of Confirmation and its basic symbols: The imposition of hands, the anointing with Sacred Chrism, and the words of the sacramental formula.*
- *Ensures that parents and sponsors are involved in the catechetical preparation of the candidates for Confirmation*
- *Teaches that the bishop is the ordinary minister of the Sacrament of Confirmation*
- *Teaches the social doctrine of the Catholic Church and offers catechesis for Christian vocations.* (NDC,36A,2 ; 45,G ; 48,D)

## **POLICY**

The Diocese of Fairbanks has set up a few requirements as well as a few recommendations to go along with the National Guidelines already mentioned.

## **GUIDELINES FOR ADDED REQUIREMENTS**

- Candidates must complete a service project of some kind based on the Gospel.
- Provisions must be made for a retreat day or day of recollection.
- All candidates must research the story of a saint of their choice. e.g. their own baptismal saint or another saint whose example they hope to follow. It is recommended that candidates use their baptismal name for Confirmation, but they may choose to be called by another saint name, if so desired.
- Candidates must know and study the Creed.
- Candidates must be provided with an opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation before being confirmed.
- Each candidate is to write a letter to the Bishop, at least a month before confirmation, declaring his/her desire to be confirmed. (an outline is available)

## **GUIDELINES FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- If possible have an Enrollment Ceremony for the candidates at the beginning of the program and an Acceptance Ceremony before Confirmation (these ceremonies are provided in many of the books or you can get them from the Diocesan Office of Religious Education).
- If possible involve the candidates in liturgy planning. e.g. Invite experienced people from the various ministries (music, environment, lectors, hospitality, servers, extraordinary ministers of communion) to teach them what is involved. Then let them prepare a Youth Liturgy where they minister in any areas they are able to participate in before being confirmed.
- Prepare candidates to become active members of the community by inviting them to choose an area of ministry to join after Confirmation.
- Assist the candidates in developing a personal prayer life (e.g. keeping a journal, taking part in shared prayer using the Bible or *Challenge* by Mark Link, S. J.)
- As a means of preparing the candidates in their knowledge of the faith, consider using "The Confirmation Review Test" available in the Diocesan Office of Religious Education.

## **IMPORTANT PASTORAL CONSIDERATION**

Prior to and separate from the celebration of the sacrament of Confirmation, pastors or pastoral administrators are to arrange to meet with the candidate preparing for the sacrament. The pastor, pastoral administrator, or other competent person who has been delegated for this purpose may conduct this interview.

*.NOTE: In the villages, certain adaptations may have to be made to the guidelines presented here. Regional leaders and their catechists should work together to determine any adaptations*

# CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT

## POLICY

*Ordinarily the sacrament is administered by the bishop so that there will be a more evident relationship to the first pouring forth of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Attention should be paid to the festive and solemn character of the liturgical service, and its significance for the local church, especially if all the candidates are assembled for a common celebration (Rite of Confirmation, 7 and 4).*

## GUIDELINES

- At least a month before Confirmation, call or e-mail the Office of Worship for a Liturgy Preparation Guide.
- Vestments are to be RED for Sundays, Sunday vigils and weekdays during Ordinary Time, for Christmas Season and for Pentecost. They are to be WHITE for Sundays, Sunday vigils, and weekdays during Advent, Lent, and the Easter Season. On solemnities the color corresponds to the day.
- The bishop will bring his own alb, but you are to provide the proper chasuble.
- Chairs should be set for the bishop and any priest(s) who assist him.
- If there is a deacon, he should be seated to the right of the bishop.
- Books, vessels, and other items needed:
  - ❖ Lectionary on the ambo
  - ❖ Book of the Gospels to be carried in by deacon (or lector, if no deacon)
  - ❖ Sacramentary (or Presider book with complete liturgy). Bishop will bring the Rite of Confirmation to use with Sacramentary.
  - ❖ Water for sprinkling (optional, but wonderful connection to baptism)
  - ❖ Thurible, charcoal, and incense (optional)
  - ❖ Container of Chrism
  - ❖ Lemon (if possible), water and towel for washing after anointing
  - ❖ Sufficient hosts, wine cups, and patens for offering communion under both kinds (using consecrated hosts from the Tabernacle is discouraged)
  - ❖ Corporal, purificators, water, bowl & towel for washing during offertory
  - ❖ Easter candle placed near ambo or baptismal font
- During Ordinary Time and on weekdays, scripture readings may be taken in whole or in part from the Mass of the day or from the texts for Confirmation found in *Lectionary for Weekdays IV* (nos. 764-768). On the Sundays of Advent, Lent and Easter, on solemnities, and during the Holy Week and Octave of Easter, the prayers and readings from the day must be used.
  - ❖ As for all liturgies, the readers should be well prepared
- The music used should speak of our baptismal dignity, the Paschal Mystery, our call to Christian witness, and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. It should highlight the significant parts of the liturgy and be familiar to the candidates.
- The candidates and their sponsors should enter in procession with the bishop and go to their appointed seats...probably in the front row with sponsors beside them or behind them (depending on how many are being confirmed).
- After the Gospel, the catechist (or appointed person) will call the names of the confirmandi. They will respond "PRESENT" and stand until all have been called. Then they will be seated for the homily. *(This presentation can also be done, by each sponsor...or parent and sponsor... introducing the confirmandi, one at a time, to the Bishop. Let the Bishop know ahead of time how you will be doing it.)*
- After the homily they will stand at their seats again and respond "I DO" to the questions asked by the Bishop in renewal of their baptismal promises.

- The Bishop will then lay hands on each of them, one at a time, ***in silence***. Any concelebrating priests will follow him doing the same. At the end of the *laying on of hands*, the Bishop will say a prayer.
- The candidates now go to the Bishop, one at a time, each accompanied by their sponsor. The candidate tells Bishop his/her confirmation name and the Bishop anoints him/her. The sponsor puts his/her hand(s) on the confirmandi's shoulder(s) during the anointing. When the Bishop says..." N., be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.", the newly confirmed answers, loud and clear, "AMEN". When the bishop says, "Peace be with you", the newly confirmed answers again, loud and clear, "AND ALSO WITH YOU". After the anointing, the newly confirmed and sponsor return to their seats and the next candidate moves forward.
- If, because of circumstances, all of the confirmandi and sponsors must go to the front at the same time for the Laying on of Hands and the Anointing, let the Bishop know ahead of time how you will be doing it. If it is done in this manner, the Bishop will go to each confirmandi and all will remain in the front until everyone has been anointed.
- After the anointing, the Bishop will have the community welcome the newly confirmed and then the Mass will continue.
- It is important that the parish community, after the celebration of the sacrament, provide a way to express their joy and solidarity with the newly confirmed.

### **REGISTRATION OF SACRAMENTAL INFORMATION**

*There are specific requirements in the Code of Canon Law for Confirmation to be recorded (see Canon 535-§1& § 2 ; Canon 895).*

#### **POLICY**

Before they can receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, all candidates MUST have a copy of the record of their baptism from the Church where they were baptized

- If baptized in the Diocese of Fairbanks, this record can be obtained from the Resource Library/Archives at the Chancery.

#### **POLICY**

After the Sacrament of Confirmation is conferred, the information must be recorded in the parish records and sent to the Church of Baptism to be entered into the Baptismal register

#### **GUIDELINES**

The following information must be recorded in the parish record book:

- Confirmandi's name
- Name of the minister conferring the sacrament
- Names of parents and sponsor
- Place and date of the Confirmation ceremony

The same information is required to be sent to the Church where the person was baptized. There it will be entered into the Baptismal register next to their record of baptism.

- If baptized in the same parish where they are confirmed, be sure to record the information in the Baptism register, as well as in the Confirmation register.

**POLICIES AND GUIDELINES FOR SPECIAL SITUATIONS ARE AVAILABLE FROM THE OFFICE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OR THE OFFICE OF WORSHIP.**

e.g. Persons who are home schooled or Those with Special Needs