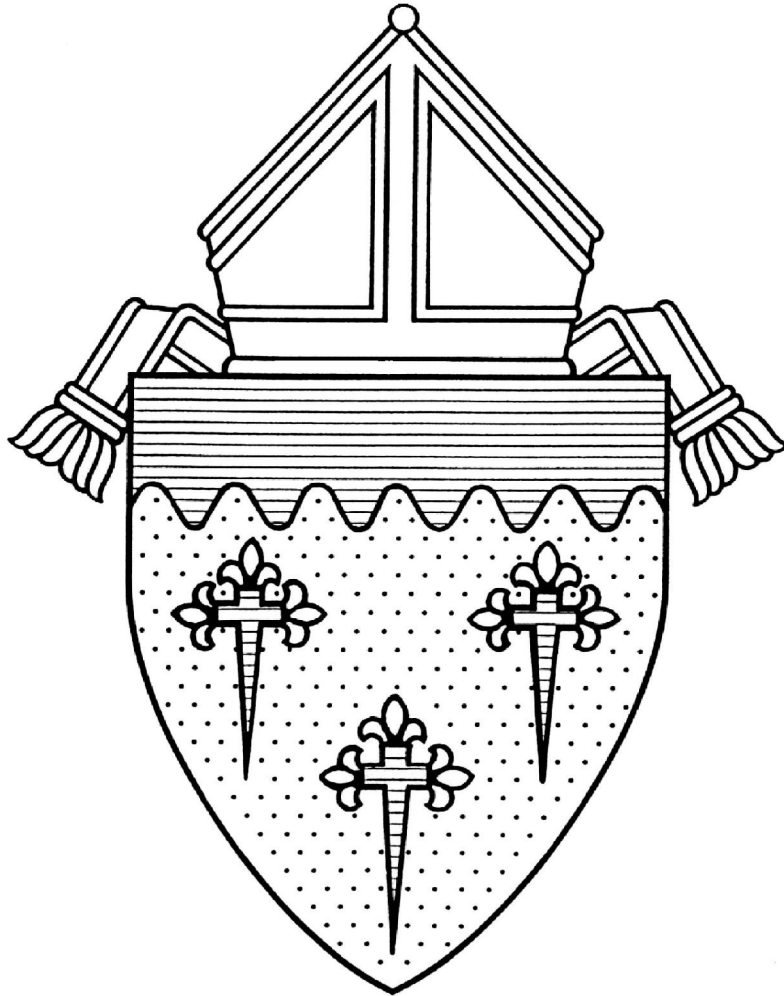


DIOCESE OF SUPERIOR



Guidelines for Confirmation

May 2013
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INTRODUCTION

Baptism, the Eucharist and Confirmation together constitute the “sacraments of Christian initiation,” whose unity must be safeguarded. It must be explained to the faithful that the reception of the sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace. For “by the sacrament of Confirmation, {the baptized} are more perfectly bound to the Church and are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit. Hence they are, as true witnesses of Christ, more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1285).

CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT

Those to be Confirmed

Canon 889, § 1 states that “all baptized persons who have not been confirmed and *only they* are capable of receiving Confirmation.” In the Diocese of Superior the bishop has made a pastoral decision to confer the sacrament of Confirmation only on those in the **eleventh grade and above** (Diocesan Policy Manual, # 630).

The Rite of Confirmation

It is desirable that the sacrament of Confirmation be celebrated in a church and during Mass (cf. Canon 881). The chrism to be used must be consecrated by a bishop, even if the sacrament is administered by a presbyter (cf. Canon 880, § 2). The diocesan bishop typically administers Confirmation to candidates, but if necessity requires, he may give the faculty to administer this sacrament to one or more specified presbyters (cf. Canon 884).

The Rite of Christian Initiation

In the case where a young person has not been regularly attending religious education classes, is over the age of discretion (age 7), and is missing any initiation sacraments, (such as Baptism, the Eucharist and Confirmation), it would be appropriate to enter into the Rite of Christian Initiation to insure that the faithful are properly instructed to receive the initiation sacraments simultaneously (cf. Canon 852 and Canon 890). For persons entering the Rite of Christian Initiation, Easter Vigil is a common time where specified presbyters across the world bring in catechumens or candidates into the Church, using the consecrated chrism and with permission of the local bishop.

PREPARATION

Catechesis

Catechesis is a life-long process. Growth in the knowledge and practice of our faith continues throughout adult life. Confirmation is not the end but a step in the journey. Ideally, youth will have participated regularly in catechetical programs and will have an understanding of the basic principles of the Christian message and its Catholic teachings. Candidates should have a basic understanding of the Trinity, creation, Jesus, Holy Spirit, Church, Sacraments, grace, morality, Mary and the Saints, death, judgment, and eternity. However, this is not always the reality. Parents, catechists, sponsors and pastors may need to assist youth entering the confirmation process that have not had this experience. It is also necessary to make connections to Confirmation especially when addressing the other two initiation sacraments of Baptism and Holy Eucharist.

Components of catechesis in preparation for Confirmation include:

- Learning that Confirmation increases and deepens the grace of Baptism, imprinting an indelible character on the soul;
- Learning 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, bear witness to the Christian faith in words and deeds;
- Learning about the role of the Holy Spirit, his gifts and his fruits;
- Retreat experience(s) and multiple opportunities for the sacrament of Reconciliation;
- Developmentally appropriate curriculum;
- 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 (cf. Canon 880);
- The involvement of parents and sponsors in the catechetical preparation of the children and youth for Confirmation;
- Volunteer opportunities within church and the broader community, i.e., service projects ideally 25+ hours, up to 40 hours.
- Learning that the Bishop is the ordinary minister of the sacrament of Confirmation (National Directory for Catechesis, pp. 122-123).

Immediate Preparation

Immediate preparation takes place during the year of Confirmation (unless Confirmation is celebrated in the fall, the immediate preparation should begin the preceding year). Study should include the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist), Pentecost, the Holy Spirit in scripture and in the history of the Church, an explanation of and the meaning of the Rite of Confirmation. Immediate preparation should consist of a minimum of 16 hours preparing for Confirmation (Diocesan Confirmation Policy Letter, 1974). This is in addition to the minimum requirement of 24 hours of catechesis per grade level (cf. Diocesan Religious Education Guidelines 2008). **As part of their immediate preparation for Confirmation, candidates should be given the opportunity to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation.**

Service

Service is an important element of Catholic living. Service is action-oriented and can include parish, community and global concerns. Catechetical programs need to prepare youth and adults for service and help them reflect on their experience afterwards. While service is an integral component to the confirmation process, it should be seen as the call of all Catholics and as a life-long commitment. Therefore, service projects should assist youth in developing an attitude of lifelong service. Service during immediate preparation for Confirmation consists of a minimum of 25 hours (Diocesan Confirmation Policy Letter, 1974). Overnight hours during a mission trip would not be included in the hourly count nor would formation hours. Rather, it would be the direct time of service that would constitute fulfillment of service hours.

Confirmation Name

Candidates should be given the opportunity to select a confirmation name. Because the sacrament of Confirmation provides candidates with time to reflect on how they should live out their baptismal commitment, imitating holy men and women of previous ages, the selection of a candidate's name is best guided by their devotion to a particular saint and his/her commitment to living as a Catholic in today's world. It is recommended that the candidate study the saint and gain knowledge of the saint's witness of faith. The selected confirmation name (e.g., a name of a saint or virtue) would be used instead of one's baptismal name. When a saint's name is used, the candidate should have a particular devotion or reason for choosing this saint name. **Only one name should be given to the Bishop, in which the candidate is to be confirmed.**

Retreat

A retreat is an effective setting for individuals to strengthen their relationship with God and to experience life in a smaller Catholic community. A Confirmation retreat gives youth a time and place in which to reflect upon and internalize what they have heard about the Holy Spirit and the Church. A retreat should have:

- A length between a minimum of 8 hours or a maximum of 3 days;
- The sacrament of Reconciliation is encouraged to be made available while on retreat;
- Holy Mass (preferably to follow the sacrament of Reconciliation);
- Balance of rest, prayer and activity;
- Prayer experiences such as liturgy of the hours, Eucharistic adoration and benediction, mental prayer, praise and worship, stations of the cross, *lectio divina*, the rosary or the divine mercy chaplet;
- Catholic presenters in good standing and actively practicing their faith, and without canonical impediments. Parishes are encouraged to find presenters outside of their local parish or parish cluster;
- Topics that focus on encountering Christ and the gifts of the Holy Spirit; and
- A location that is off-site so as to give retreatants an opportunity to "retreat" or "get away" from the norm.

Enrollment Ceremony

A rite of enrollment may be celebrated at the beginning of immediate preparation. An adaptation of the Rite of Election from the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults may be used.

It is important to remember that each candidate is to make a free, mature choice about reception of the sacrament. They are not to be pressured into receiving the sacrament (Diocesan Confirmation Policy Letter, 1974).

Letter of Intent

Since the free will aspect of the sacrament is stressed, candidate(s) are to write a letter to the Bishop requesting to receive the sacrament of Confirmation and give their reasons for the request. The letter introduces the candidate to the Bishop; therefore it should give their personal feelings concerning the sacrament, the Church, and their faith life. The letter may include how they have prepared, their choice of sponsor and why and how they plan to share their gifts with the Church. Candidates

should share why they have chosen their confirmation name. The letters should be type-written and should arrive at the Bishop's office **2-3 weeks prior** to the celebration of Confirmation. The pastor or confirmation coordinator should gather the letters and send them as a group rather than sending individual letters. These letters are intended for only the Bishop to read.

Interviews

The pastor and/or confirmation leader conducts interviews at the completion of the immediate preparation sessions. The interview is not a test, but should allow youth to express where they are at in their journey with God. It is helpful to provide the youth with reflection questions in advance to act as a guide for the interview.

An additional interview may be conducted at the beginning of the confirmation process. The group facilitators could conduct this interview, which allows them a further opportunity to get to know the youth in their group.

After the celebration of Confirmation, follow-up interviews or sessions are recommended to provide opportunities for the newly confirmed to share their experience of the sacrament and what their plans are for continuing to live out their faith in the parish community.

Role of Parents and Sponsors

Catechesis for Confirmation should "ensure that parents and sponsors are involved in the catechetical formation of the children for Confirmation" (National Directory for Catechesis, pp. 122-123, cf. Canon 890). A number of catechetical sessions should also be designed to include parents and sponsors. The Church should make efforts to invite and better equip all the faithful to live out their baptismal call. It is recommended to give parents and sponsors general instruction to the Rite of Confirmation by a preliminary meeting at the start of immediate Confirmation preparation, and also prior to the candidate's conferral of Confirmation. The initial meeting for parents and candidates is held to inform them of the plans and expectations of the confirmation program. Both parents and sponsors will greatly benefit from better understanding the sacrament of Confirmation. Several times during preparation, parents and sponsors should be invited to take part in the life of the parish community. The role of the sponsor should be explained at this time. Parents **may not** be their child's sponsor but may help their child to select a sponsor (Diocese of Superior Policy Manual #640 or Canons 893 & 874). Other qualifications for a sponsor are: 1) be at least 17 years old; 2) be a baptized and confirmed Catholic who has received Holy Communion; and 3) be living a life in harmony with the Catholic faith and role undertaken. The sponsor should be a true and authentic witness of Christ and free of any canonical penalties (cf. Canons 892 and 874). If at all possible, it is desirable that the one who undertook the role of sponsor at baptism be sponsor for Confirmation (Policies for the Administration of the Sacraments in Accord with Canon Law, Diocese of Superior, March 1989, cf. Canon 893).

CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Canon 777 § 4 states "the catechetical instruction is given also to those who are physically or mentally handicapped, insofar as their condition permits." Pastors are responsible to be as inclusive as possible to persons with disabilities. Parish catechetical and sacramental preparation programs may need to be adapted for some parishioners with disabilities (cf. Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities 5).

RECORDS

When several parishes join together for the celebration of Confirmation, the pastor or parish director or parish life coordinator of **each** of the parishes involved is responsible for recording the Confirmation of their parish members in their **own** parish register. If the candidate was baptized elsewhere, the parish of the Baptism is to be notified.

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