

**THE CELEBRATION OF THE  
SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION WITH CHILDREN**  
*(under the age of 18)*

**INTRODUCTION**

1. 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. (Canon #879)
  
2. Since the Sacraments are a community celebration, reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation should occur in a communal setting within the community in which the preparation has taken place. All members of the parish community should be advised of and invited to the celebration of this sacred event. It may be preferable to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation in a regional setting.
  
3. As the primary educators of their child, parent/guardian 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 . This catechesis should include the Church's rich teachings of the sacrament. It should be designed to deepen the parent/guardian understanding of the sacrament so they can guide their child into fuller participation in the life and worship of the Christian Community.
  
4. The normal time for candidates to begin catechesis for the reception of Confirmation is in the winter and spring seasons of ninth grade, after having participated in religious formation for at least one year prior.

The preferred time for the reception of Confirmation is during the Easter Season, prior to Pentecost. Confirmation must be administered by the Bishop or by a priest who has been granted the necessary faculties. (Canon #884)

# POLICIES

## Prerequisites for Candidacy

1. At least one parent should be a practicing, active member of their Parish Faith Community.
2. Parent/Guardian must provide a copy of the child'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 asks to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation in a parish other than the one he/she is registered, a letter of permission from the pastor/parish director must be issued.
4. Candidates must have attained the age of fifteen (15) years old at the time of Confirmation.
5. Parent/guardian and the child are expected to participate regularly in the weekly Sunday liturgy.
6. Candidates must have completed the previous year of formal religious education in a Catholic school, the parish program or in their previous parish. Those children who received catechesis as part of an overall home school program the previous year must follow text that is currently listed on the conformity list approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.
7. The candidate must be currently participating in a program of systematic, approved catechesis either in a Catholic school or as a registered student of a parish program. Candidates who are receiving religious education as part of an overall home school program must follow text that is currently listed on the conformity list approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.
8. At the same time, candidates must also be enrolled in a parish process of preparation for the reception of Confirmation in which children from the Catholic schools and catechetical ministry programs are united. They must participate in all of its communal dimensions (catechesis, ritual, service, spiritual retreats, etc.) and any other requirements determined by the parish.

9. Candidates must be able to renew their baptismal promises and have no impediments to participating in the Eucharist such as being in the state of mortal sin or not married validly in the church.<sup>1</sup>
10. Candidates must choose a suitable sponsor who will accompany them and meet the following requirements:
- Have been chosen by the candidate personally
  - Have attained the age of sixteen (16) unless special circumstances are approved by clergy
  - Are 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 imposed or declared
  - Is not the mother or father of the candidate<sup>2</sup>
- 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.<sup>3</sup>**
11. Any child, through age 17, who does not meet these prerequisites, is addressed in the Pastoral Considerations section of this document.

## Catechesis

- A. Catechesis is to be based on:
1. the doctrinal and liturgical content of the Rite of Confirmation
  2. the Liturgy of the Word from the Lectionary
  3. the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit
  4. the Liturgy of the Eucharist
  5. the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adult
  6. Confirmation as the completion and perfection of Baptism.

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<sup>1</sup> *CCL #889.2* – 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.

<sup>2</sup> *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.

<sup>3</sup> *CCL # 893.2* – It is desirable that the one who undertook the role of sponsor at the Baptism be sponsor for Confirmation.

- B. Catechesis for the candidates must be taken from text that have been found to be in doctrinal compliance with the Catechism of the Catholic Church by the Bishops' Ad Hoc Committee on Catechism and should:
1. Lead candidates into a more profound understanding and appreciation of the Eucharist and enable and encourage them to participate actively.
  2. Assist the candidates in becoming aware of the presence of Christ in the assembly, in the presider, the Word and in the Eucharistic elements.<sup>4</sup>
  3. Acquaint candidates with the symbols of the sacrament and guide them to reflect on their meanings.
  4. Immerse candidates in periods of reflection, prayer, apostolic works of service - both within and outside of the parish and retreat setting.
  5. Provide opportunities to celebrate the sacrament of Penance, especially just prior to the reception of Confirmation.
  6. Giving witness and defending the faith especially when this would be difficult.
- C. Special considerations and adaptation must be made for those candidates with disabilities in accordance with their abilities.<sup>5</sup>
- E. Catechesis for Parent/Guardian
1. As the primary educators of their child, parent/guardian has the first and most important influence on the faith development of their child. It is very important to have the parent/guardian involved in this process of preparation.
  2. Parent/guardian of all children are 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.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *GIRM #7* ...For the celebration of Mass, which perpetuates the sacrifice of the cross, Christ is really present to the assembly gathered in his name; he is present in the person of the minister, in his own word, and indeed substantially and permanently under the Eucharistic elements.

<sup>5</sup> *CCL #777.4* ... catechetical formation is to be given to those handicapped in mind or body insofar as their condition permits. Therefore, realistic provision must be made for persons with disabilities to be confirmed and to participate in the preparation for the sacrament according to this policy insofar as they are able.

<sup>6</sup> *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.

## Discernment of Readiness

- A. Parent/guardian and catechists are expected to foster the child's desire and readiness to receive the sacrament of Confirmation.
- B. The attitude, values, practice and understanding of the sacraments by the candidate, according to their age and ability, should be followed during the process in order to help discern readiness.
- C. It is ultimately the responsibility of the parish 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.<sup>7</sup>
- D. The parish priest or his delegate is to meet individually with each candidate during the formation process for discernment of readiness for the sacrament.
- E. Confirmation is not an optional sacrament. Every effort should be made in order for every child of appropriate age to receive this sacrament and complete initiation.

## Celebration of the Sacrament

- A. Candidates for Confirmation preparation may begin with a formal ritual of welcome into candidacy.<sup>8</sup>
- B. The sacrament of Confirmation is to be celebrated according to the norms of the *Rite of Confirmation* and this stated policy.
- C. Candidates should participate actively in the celebration of Confirmation, in the prayers, responses and music of the celebration of Confirmation and to participate in the Liturgy of the Eucharist.
- D. Those candidates with special needs should be accommodated appropriately.
- E. Candidates are strongly encouraged to use their baptismal name for Confirmation to convey the intimate connection of Confirmation to Baptism.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *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.

<sup>8</sup> *RCIA #411* – This optional rite welcomes baptized but previously uncatechized adults who are seeking to complete their Christian initiation through the sacraments of confirmation and eucharist or to be received into the full communion of the Catholic Church.

*RCIA #417-433 for the Rite of Welcoming the Candidates*

<sup>9</sup> *RCIA #33.4* - The National Conference of Catholic Bishops establishes as the norm in the dioceses of the United States that there is to be no giving of a new name. It also approves leaving to the discretion of the diocesan bishop the giving of a new name to a person from those cultures in which it is the practice of non-Christian religions to give a new name... #200

## **Post-Confirmation Mystagogy**

- A. The newly confirmed should have the opportunity to reflect more deeply on the meaning of their Confirmation at a special gathering.
- B. Lifelong faith formation and conversion should continue following Confirmation. Youth should continue their participation in parish youth ministry programs, liturgy, service opportunities and all other parish community life.<sup>10</sup>

## **RECORDS**

- A. 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 church of Baptism in whose Baptismal register the information is recorded.<sup>11</sup>

## **PASTORAL 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 all forms of liturgy and sacraments accessible to persons with disabilities. The inclusion of the disabled provides the community with a reminder that the Christian community reflects the diversity of God's love. Parish sacramental celebrations should

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<sup>10</sup> *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."

<sup>11</sup> *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.

be accessible to persons with disabilities and open to their full, active and conscious participation according to their capacity.

## B. Home Schooled Children

The diocese recognizes that parent/guardian are the primary educators of their child and that some parents choose to live out their role of primary educators by providing formal catechesis at home. The parish pastor and his delegates also have the responsibility to provide catechetical instruction for the child. The rights and responsibilities of parent/guardian and the parish call for collaboration between the two. The same prerequisites for candidacy apply to children who are home schooled for religious education as are required for children in parish programs and Catholic schools. These are detailed in the **Prerequisites for Candidacy** section of this document.

## C. Special Considerations

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 move in 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 older children, as the parents/guardians also have need of catechesis.<sup>12</sup> Parishes may consider instituting a process such as *Remembering Church* or *Coming Home* as the best way to help bring these families back into the faith community. Parishes are strongly encouraged to require family participation in this type of process in addition to the child's regular participation in religious

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<sup>12</sup> *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.

education classes. Participation in this type of process *may* fulfill the prerequisite of a previous year of religious education, but final decisions on this should be on an individual basis.

Catholic or non-Catholic Families

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

Promulgated on September 30, 2004 by

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Most Reverend Michael J. Sheridan  
Bishop of Colorado Springs

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

<i>Canon</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