

CONFIRMATION FOR THOSE UNDER THE AGE OF 18

Preamble

“We commonly speak of the sacrament of “chrismation”, a word that signifies “anointing”. And, in effect, through the oil called “sacred chrism” we are conformed, in the power of the Spirit, to Jesus Christ, who is the only true “Anointed One”, the “Messiah”, the Holy One of God. The word “confirmation” then reminds us that this sacrament brings an increase and deepening of baptismal grace: it unites us more firmly to Christ, it renders our bond with the Church more perfect, and it gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith, ... to confess the name of Christ boldly, and never to be ashamed of his cross. ... When we welcome the Holy Spirit into our hearts and allow him to act, Christ makes himself present in us and takes shape in our lives; through us, it will be he — Christ himself — who prays, forgives, gives hope and consolation, serves the brethren, draws close to the needy and to the least, creates community and sows peace. Think how important this is: by means of the Holy Spirit, Christ himself comes to do all this among us and for us. That is why it is important that children and young people receive the sacrament of confirmation.”

(Pope Francis, General Audience, Wednesday, January 29, 2014)

Necessary Requirements

1. Follow the canon’s relative to confirmation. (Please reference the addendum, “Canon Law on Confirmation,” at the end of this document.)
2. A valid baptism is a requirement for confirmation. The parent/guardian must provide the candidate’s original baptism certificate. After photocopying it, the original should be returned to the parent/guardian. If the original baptism certificate cannot be located and the candidate was baptized at your parish, check your baptismal records to verify the baptism. If the candidate was not baptized at your parish, have the parent/guardian contact the baptismal parish requesting a new certificate. Once received, photocopy it and give the original back to the parent/guardian for their records.
3. To receive confirmation licitly outside the danger of death requires that a person who has the use of reason be suitably instructed, properly disposed and able to renew their baptismal promises. (Canon 889 §2, see addendum)
 - A. Suitably instructed: Pastor’s discretion concerning quality and quantity of catechesis.
 - B. Properly disposed: Not in a state of mortal sin.
 - C. Able to renew their baptismal promises: Through their use of reason, they can understand and renew their baptismal promises.
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 grades.

Recommended Catechesis

1. The pastor has discretion as to what catechetical materials are used for confirmation catechesis. Texts and programs listed in the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) document "Conformity Listing of Catechetical Texts and Series" can be used but are not required. That listing can be found on the USCCB website.
2. Confirmation catechesis should be comprehensive. The diocese has available a suggested, but not required, curriculum for parish use upon request. Our curriculum can be modified to fit the needs of your confirmands, but the core concepts of confirmation should be discussed.
3. Parents/guardians are highly encouraged to participate in their child's confirmation preparation. The best and most fruitful catechesis for the reception of confirmation should involve the parents/guardians as much as possible. By participating in the catechetical programs offered by the parish, parents/guardians can grow in their own understanding and appreciation of the sacrament of confirmation and more readily guide their child into fuller participation in the life and worship of the Christian community. Canon law states, "Parents and pastors of souls, especially pastors of parishes, are to take care that the faithful are properly instructed to receive the sacrament." (Canon 890...see addition)
4. There is an expectation that the pastor, or his delegate, will provide opportunities for the newly confirmed to reflect more deeply on the meaning of their confirmation.
5. Lifelong faith formation and conversion is expected to continue following confirmation. The newly confirmed are to be encouraged to continue their participation in communal life by getting involved in parish activities and liturgies.

Confirmation Sponsors

1. The role of the sponsor is described in Canon 892. (see addendum)
2. To be admitted to the role of a sponsor, Canons 893 (see addendum) and 874 must be fulfilled. Canon 874 §1, as applied to confirmation sponsors, states, "To be permitted to take on the function of sponsor, a person must:
 - A. be designated by the one to be *confirmed*, by the parents or the person who takes their place, or in their absence by the pastor or minister and have the aptitude and intention of fulfilling this function.
 - B. have completed the sixteenth year of age, ..., or the pastor or minister has granted an exception for a just cause.
 - C. be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist and who leads a life of faith in keeping with the function to be taken on.
 - D. not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared.
 - E. not be the father or mother of the one to be *confirmed*."(Note: "*confirmed*" replaces "baptized" in the use of Canon 874 when applied to confirmation sponsors)
3. If married, the person must have been validly married in the Catholic Church.

4. Per Canon 893 §2, it is desirable to choose the candidate's baptismal sponsor(s) (godparent(s)) to be their confirmation sponsor(s) if they still meet the requirements listed in Canon 874 and are willing and able to fulfill this role.
5. The "Godparent (Sponsor) Form for Baptism and Confirmation" provided by the diocese can be a helpful aid as it reflects the minimum necessary requirements for the role. This form can be expanded upon at the discretion of the pastor.

Confirmation Names

1. It is preferred that each candidate chooses the name of a Saint for his/her confirmation name that is different than his/her given name. A non-Saint Christian name is also allowed for his/her confirmation name. However, if the candidate's given name is a Christian name and he/she would like to use it as his/her confirmation name as well, he/she should be allowed to do so.
2. At the celebration of confirmation by the bishop, the candidate's sponsor, standing behind the candidate with his/her right hand on the right shoulder of the candidate, should say out loud the confirmation name of the candidate to the bishop just before he/she is confirmed. The sponsor should use the following words: "Reverend Bishop, I present to you <confirmation name>."

Discernment of Readiness

It is the responsibility of the candidate's pastor, in collaboration with the parents/guardians and the candidate themselves, to establish that the candidate for confirmation is properly prepared and disposed to receive the sacrament. The pastor, or his delegate, should meet individually with each candidate during the formation process to determine his/her readiness.

Recording of the Sacrament

The names of those who received the sacrament of confirmation, the celebrant, sponsor(s), parent(s), place, and date of the ceremony are to be recorded in the confirmation register of the parish where confirmation took place. This information must also be sent to the confirmands' church of baptism (Canon 895). Please see the "Handbook on Sacramental Records and Reports for Parish Personnel" for more information.

Special Considerations

1. **Home Schooled Children** – The candidate's pastor must see to it that proper catechetical instruction for the child is provided. The rights and responsibilities of the 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 confirmation catechesis in the home participate in the other communal aspects of preparation at their parish (i.e., prayer services, special projects, etc.) that are prescribed for preparation for the sacrament.

2. **Children with Disabilities** – Special considerations and adaptations may need to be made for those candidates with disabilities. Contact the Diocesan Pastoral Center should you need resource assistance.

Unique Circumstances

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

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What if a family requests the sacrament for a child that is younger than 8th grade? Does approval need to be obtained from the bishop?**

Yes. He will treat these on a case-by-case basis. Also, if granted, the pastor would need to receive delegation from the bishop to celebrate the sacrament of confirmation.

2. **How long should the confirmation preparation process be?**

It depends on whether the necessary requirements for reception of the sacrament have been met. If they have been met, confirmation should take place as soon as possible. There is no set timeframe for this. However, it would be reasonable to expect candidate participation in a parish process during the school year in which the candidate is confirmed.

3. **If the candidate currently attends a Catholic school and is receiving confirmation preparation at the school, do they need to be enrolled in parish preparation as well?**

If the candidate belongs to the same parish where the school is located, it is the pastor's discretion as to what preparation is necessary. There may be communal aspects that the parish is doing (e.g., prayer services, special projects, etc.) that are not done at the school that the candidate may benefit from participating in. If the candidate does not belong to the parish where the school is located, then the pastor where the family worships has discretion as to what preparation is necessary.

4. **What if the candidate currently attends a Catholic school and is receiving confirmation preparation at the school but belongs to another parish. Where should that child celebrate the sacrament?**

It is preferable that the candidate celebrates 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/her class at the parish where the school is located, the family should request the family's pastor to grant permission, in writing, to the school pastor allowing the candidate to celebrate the sacrament at his parish. This permission, if granted, does not excuse a candidate from participating in the communal confirmation activities (retreats, service projects, etc.) at the candidate's parish. This permission is a courtesy between pastors, but it is not an impediment for receiving the sacrament.

5. Is a confirmation sponsor absolutely necessary to receive the sacrament?

No. Canon 892 (see addendum) indicates that one is not absolutely necessary. However, a confirmation sponsor for each candidate is desired and preferred as they can be a tremendous aid in the faith life of the candidate.

6. Can a candidate have more than one sponsor (e.g., both godparents)?

Yes. However, a single sponsor should be the norm. An obvious example of approving two confirmation sponsors would be if the child had two sponsors (godparents) at baptism that still meet the requirements of Canon 874 and are desired by the candidate to be his/her confirmation sponsors. Pastor's discretion should be used on any other requests for more than one confirmation sponsor.

7. Can a proxy be used if a sponsor cannot be present at the celebration of confirmation?

Yes. Canon law does not specifically mention a sponsor's presence through a proxy. This silence, however, should not be understood as barring the use of a proxy to stand in for an absent sponsor. Proxy sponsors are allowed. The official sponsor is, however, still the sponsor who could not be present at confirmation, not the proxy. Both should be recorded in the confirmation register. Just after (or below) the absent sponsor's name, place in parentheses the proxy's name with the notation "by proxy." Example: (by proxy John Smith)

8. Should we refuse celebration of the sacrament if someone violates our dress code?

No. How one is dressed is not an impediment to receiving the sacrament. You can and should encourage appropriate dress for this special day but ultimately, it cannot be used as a reason to deny the sacrament.

9. Can we withhold the sacrament if a candidate, or parent, does not attend a certain number, or percentage, of catechetical classes?

If the requirements of Canon 889 §2 (see addendum) are met, you cannot withhold the sacrament. Let Canon 889 §2 be your guide.

10. Do the confirmation candidates have to attend a confirmation retreat and do service projects to receive the sacrament?

No. Those events can be fruitful if well-done, but they are not required by canon law. Once again, let Canon 889 §2 be your guide.

11. The original baptism certificate for the candidate cannot be located and the parish where the candidate's baptism took place doesn't have a record of the baptism. What do I do next?

If no record of the baptism can be found, seek a witness who can confirm that the baptism took place. Only one witness is necessary per Canons 875 and 876. Pictures taken at the baptism can be helpful as well. If procedural clarification is needed, contact our diocesan Tribunal and/or Chancellor's Office for assistance.

Addendum: Canon Law on Confirmation

Canon 879 – 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 gift of the Holy Spirit the baptized continuing on the path of Christian initiation, and binds them more perfectly to the Church.

Canon 889 – §1. Every baptized person not yet confirmed and only such a person is capable of receiving confirmation.

§2. To receive confirmation licitly outside of the danger of death requires that a person who has the use of reason be suitably instructed, properly disposed, and able to renew the baptismal promises.

Canon 890 – The faithful are obliged to receive this sacrament at the proper time. Parents and pastors of souls, especially pastors of parishes, are to take care that the faithful are properly instructed to receive the sacrament and come to it at the appropriate time.

Canon 891 – The sacrament of confirmation is to be conferred on the faithful at about the age of discretion unless the conference of bishops has determined another age, or there is danger of death, or in the judgement of the minister a grave cause suggests otherwise.

Canon 892 – Insofar as possible, there is to be a sponsor for the person to be confirmed; the sponsor is to take care that the confirmed person behaves as a true witness of Christ and faithfully fulfills the obligation inherent in this sacrament.

Canon 893 – §1. To perform the function of sponsor, a person must fulfill the conditions mentioned in can. 874.

§2. It is desirable to choose as sponsor the one who undertook the same function in baptism.

(all canons related to confirmation: 879 – 896)

Other References on Confirmation:

- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: 1285-1321
- *The Order of Confirmation*