

# **GUIDELINES FOR THE CELEBRATION OF CONFIRMATION**

## **I. THOSE ELIGIBLE TO CELEBRATE THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION**

### **1. Who is eligible to celebrate Confirmation?**

- a. All baptized Catholics who possess the use of reason may receive the sacrament of Confirmation if they are properly instructed, properly disposed, and are able to renew their baptismal promises. (canon 889)
- b. The United States Bishops have issued a statement stating that the age for conferring the sacrament of confirmation in the U.S. Latin-rite dioceses will be between “the age of discretion and about sixteen years of age.”
- c. In the Diocese of Honolulu the Bishop has declared that a youth wishing to be confirmed is expected to be at least in the ninth or tenth grade, and have participated in a parish Confirmation program for at least two years.

### **2. Must a person be baptized to celebrate Confirmation?**

One must be a baptized Catholic, or have a clear indication of Christian baptism in conjunction with a Profession of Faith to celebrate Confirmation. A certificate of Catholic baptism or a certificate of Profession of Faith must be on file with the parish.

### **3. How is readiness of the youth to celebrate Confirmation to be determined?**

- a. Because Confirmation celebrates a response of the individual to the gift of faith, the primary responsibility of determining when a candidate is ready for the sacrament lies with the individual candidate. The candidate should also discuss readiness with their parents (guardians), pastor and catechists.
- b. Many have found that personal interviews with the candidate, conducted by the pastor, or his designee, are helpful in discerning readiness of the youth to celebrate Confirmation. Parents can also

be helpful in determining the readiness of their youth, and should be consulted if readiness is in question.

- c. Before celebrating Confirmation, candidates should be “expected to have undergone a conversion in mind and in action and to have developed a sufficient acquaintance with Christian teaching as well as a spirit of faith and charity.” (*Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults*, #120)
- d. If the youth chooses to delay Confirmation, or if it is determined by the pastor that the youth is not ready to celebrate the sacrament, the sacrament may be delayed (not denied) until some future date.

It is important that other catechetical approaches be available to those young people, who will not be confirmed, during the time when immediate preparation for Confirmation is underway. Mini-courses, scripture study groups or faith-sharing groups may meet their needs for continued faith formation and discernment.

**4. What should happen in the case of a youth who is older than the age at which the sacrament is usually celebrated?**

- a. To be considered a candidate for Confirmation, the youth must have been baptized, and also should have participated in at least two years of catechetical preparation prior to beginning immediate preparation for the sacrament. A special catechetical approach for preparing older teens may need to be provided.
- b. For teens that have been baptized in another Christian faith a record of valid baptism must be received by the parish. They may prepare for Confirmation as a candidate through the RCIA process in the parish.

**5. What about a practicing Catholic adult who has not yet celebrated Confirmation?**

- a. A Catholic adult who has been practicing the faith (**baptism and eucharist**), but has not celebrated Confirmation, may request to be confirmed when the Bishop comes to the parish to celebrate the sacrament. Suitable catechesis, as determined by the pastor, should be provided prior to the celebration of Confirmation.
- b. If it is determined that the Confirmation should be celebrated before the scheduled date with the Bishop, the pastor may request a *delegation to confirm* from the Bishop who gives him the faculty to

confirm at a community celebration, preferably within Mass. (canon 884.1)

**6. What is the practice for unbaptized adults, and adults seeking full communion with the Catholic Church?**

Unbaptized adults, after a period of inquiry and discernment in the RCIA process, may enter the order of the catechumens. They, along with adults seeking full communion with the Catholic Church, are generally confirmed at the Easter Vigil. (Note: an adult who has a valid baptism in a non-Catholic church, and is seeking full communion with the Catholic Church, is formed and received in accord with the Rite of Reception of Baptized Christians into Full Communion with the Catholic Church and not by the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults).

**7. What are the general considerations for preparing persons with special needs?**

- a. Youth who are physically or mentally disabled are to feel welcomed in the parish sacramental program, and whenever possible, to participate in preparatory activities and parish celebrations with adaptation provided for their needs.
- b. Persons who because of developmental or mental disabilities may never attain the use of reason are to be encouraged either directly or, if necessary through their parents or guardian to receive the sacrament of confirmation at the appropriate time. (*Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities*, Confirmation #16)

**II. THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS (GUARDIANS) AND SPONSORS**

**1. What role do parents (guardians) have in choosing the sacrament for their son/daughter?**

- a. Parents express a desire for their son/daughter to celebrate Confirmation by enrolling them in their parish program. Although the parents (guardians) may decide for their teen that they will be instructed for Confirmation, the decision to be confirmed rests with the young person.
- b. In some extenuating circumstances, parents working with the pastor and/or catechetical leader may prepare their teen for reception of the sacrament at home. Since the community building aspect of catechesis is so important, individuals prepared at home

should be encouraged to participate in the Confirmation retreat, service experiences, parent meetings and practices.

**2. Does the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the youth need to be a practicing Catholic?**

If the youth's parents (guardians) are not practicing Catholics, but they desire that their son/daughter celebrate the sacrament of Confirmation, and the youth has been practicing the faith, been properly catechized, and seeks to receive the sacrament, then the sacrament cannot be denied. Pastoral sensitivity should be shown for the family's circumstances, and efforts made to find ways that will strengthen the relationship of the family to the parish community.

**3. Who gives permission for the youth to celebrate the sacrament if the youth is not living with his/her parents?**

- a. If the youth, who is younger than eighteen years of age, and is living with someone other than the parent(s) or legal guardian, then the parent(s) or legal guardian must be contacted and asked to grant permission, in writing, before the youth begins preparation for Confirmation. If permission is not forthcoming; then preparation for celebrating the sacrament should be delayed (not refused) until such consent is received or the youth reaches the age of eighteen.
- b. In cases of joint custody, both parents must be asked to grant permission, in writing, before immediate preparation begins.

**4. Should a person be forced by their parents against their wishes to be confirmed?**

- a. Parents need to strongly encourage their teen to participate in the preparation process for Confirmation, and subsequently to make their decision about being confirmed.
- b. No one should be forced to be confirmed. Celebrating a sacrament against one's will makes the sacrament invalid.
- c. If after discussion with his/her parents (guardian) and the pastor, a youth does not choose to be confirmed, his/her wishes should be respected. A person may decide not to be confirmed for a variety of reasons, and this should not be viewed as a rejection of one's faith. There are always opportunities to celebrate Confirmation at a later date.

**5. How frequently should the youth be participating at Sunday Mass?**

It is the responsibility not only of the parents (guardians), but also the youth, that they participate regularly at Sunday Mass. Simply participating in the catechetical program is not sufficient preparation for celebrating Confirmation.

**6. How are parents to be included in the preparation process?**

- a. Parishes should regard the preparation process as an opportunity for focused faith sharing between parents (guardians) and their teen. Ideally the occasion of preparation for Confirmation can be a time of renewed commitment by parents (guardians) as well as the entire family.
- b. Catechetical programs should be offered for parents (guardians) and should include the theological understanding of the sacrament and spiritual nourishment for the faith life of the family. As the primary educators of their children and youth, parents have a duty to participate in the preparation of their children and youth for the sacraments (canon 890). Parents (guardians) and sponsors should be involved in the preparation process as much as possible.

**7. Is parental (guardian) participation in the program necessary for their son/daughter to be confirmed?**

Participation by the parent or guardian in the program should be expected. It is the duty and privilege of the parents (guardians) to prepare their son/daughter to practice the Catholic faith. If a youth desires to be confirmed, lack of parental participation, however, would not prevent confirmation. Pastoral understanding and sensitivity in such circumstances should be exercised.

**8. Who may be a sponsor for Confirmation?**

- a. Due to the intrinsic unity of the three sacraments, Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, it is desirable that one of the Baptismal sponsors be the sponsor for Confirmation. If this is impossible or inappropriate, another sponsor may be chosen by the youth in consultation with their parents (guardian).
- b. There should be only one sponsor designated as the liturgical sponsor who presents the candidate for Confirmation. Sponsors should not have more than one candidate for Confirmation.
- c. A parent may **not** act as a sponsor for their son or daughter. The sponsor, representing the entire community of believers, undertakes the obligation to *assist* the parents in their role of raising

their youth in the faith, especially if the parent(s) is unable to perform this function. (canon 874.1 and 874.5)

- d. The sponsor need not be the same gender as the candidate.
- e. The sponsor must be:
  - a baptized Catholic who has been confirmed,
  - a practicing Catholic who “leads a life in harmony with the faith and the role to be undertaken” (canon 874),
  - sufficiently mature for the role; older than 16 years of age, unless the pastor determines that an exception should be made for just cause.

### **9. What is the role of the sponsor?**

The role of the sponsor is to be an example and a source of support for their candidate. It is recommended that the sponsor meet with their candidate several times during the preparatory period, and if possible attend any scheduled meetings and practices.

### **10. May the sponsor request a proxy to represent them at the Confirmation celebration?**

If it is possible, the sponsor should be present for the Confirmation. If the sponsor is unable to attend the Confirmation it is permissible for a proxy to stand in at the ceremony. A parent may serve as proxy if necessary. A proxy should be so designated in writing and meet the same qualifications as a sponsor. The sponsor's name will be recorded in the parish registry not the proxies.

## **III. THE CATECHETICAL PROGRAM**

### **1. Who determines the materials to be used in the Confirmation process?**

The pastor, parish DRE/CRE, and catechists should determine the materials and resources to be used in the sacramental program. A list of recommended resources is available through the Diocesan Office of Religious Education.

### **2. What resources do parents (guardians) who home school their teen use?**

Parents who home school their son/daughter are required to use the same or equivalent materials used in the parish catechetical program. Parents are responsible for ensuring that their son/daughter (to the extent that he/she is

physically or emotionally able) participates in any additional activities that the program provides such as: a retreat, candidate interview, group service opportunity, practices, etc. Parents (guardians) may also be required to attend parent meetings as determined by the pastor.

Home School Guidelines for Religious Education are available through the Diocesan Office of Religious Education and can also be found in the Catechetical Leaders Handbook.

### 3. What kind of catechesis is needed for youth?

- a. **Remote catechesis** encompasses all the catechesis leading to this moment. It should:

- focus on the life of Christian discipleship lived in the context of Catholic community,
- provide opportunities for community service,
- foster an openness to the movement of the Holy Spirit and commitment to participation in the Eucharistic community, and
- help deepen the prayer life and faith of the student.

Remote catechesis involves participation in a catechetical program from Kindergarten until immediate preparation for Confirmation. At the very least, this period of catechesis should last two years. The DRE/CRE and parents (guardians) should work together to arrange for any remedial preparation needed.

- b. **Immediate** catechesis is a preparation period of two years specifically for Confirmation and should include:

- **message:** which focuses on the rite of Confirmation, and the signs, symbols and images related to celebrating the sacrament;
- **worship:** which includes opportunities for deepening prayer, faith and commitment to Eucharistic participation. A retreat is encouraged for all candidates preparing for the sacrament. Students must also participate at Sunday Mass and Holy Days of Obligation;
- **community:** leads candidates into a deeper recognition of and identification with the Christian community and its beliefs. The total parish should feel included in the preparation of the candidates for Confirmation;
- **service:** is an essential component of preparation for Confirmation and is integral in the life of a disciple of Christ.

Service should never be reduced to a “project” to be completed.

**4. How long should the immediate preparation period last?**

Candidates in both public and parochial schools are required to complete a two-year Confirmation process in their parish. Since the goal is to form Christian community among the candidates it is believed that two years is optimum time for candidates to pray, learn, share, worship and serve together. Consistent attendance in the Confirmation process is expected.

**5. What are the Diocesan requirements for those celebrating Confirmation?**

The requirements for a candidate preparing to celebrate Confirmation are:

- a. **Catechesis:** “Generally youth catechesis should be proposed in new ways which are open to the sensibilities and problems of this age group. They should be of a theological, ethical, historical and social nature. In particular, due emphasis should be given to education in truth and liberty as understood by the Gospel, to the formation of conscious and to education for love. Emphasis should also be placed on vocational discernment.” (*General Directory For Catechesis* #185)
- b. **Liturgy:** Central to the parish community’s expression of faith is the weekly Sunday gatherings for the Eucharist. Candidates are expected to participate in the weekly Sunday Eucharistic celebration at the parish. In addition, some special liturgies should be planned to heighten the candidate’s sense of their own faith journey.
- c. **Rituals & Blessings:** Those who are involved in the Confirmation process are already candidates for Confirmation by virtue of their Baptism. Sometime during Year I of the process an acknowledgement of this candidacy should occur within the parish community. At this time the candidates would be introduced to the parish and a special blessing conferred upon them.

“Rite of Calling the Candidates to Continuing Conversion” (*Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* #450-472). This ceremony takes place in Year II on the first Sunday of Lent prior to the reception of Confirmation. Candidates will affirm their intention to enter into a time of purification and reflection.



- d. **Service:** A combination of group and individual experiences designed to develop the attitude of Christian service will be required totaling 25 to 30 hours over the two year process. The focus of service should be outreach to the poor, shut-ins, and persons with disabilities.

NOTE: For candidates in private or parochial schools, which require community service, these hours can be applied to the hours of service required for the Confirmation process with the approval of the parish DRE/CRE or Confirmation coordinator.

- e. **Retreats:** Candidates will be required to attend at least one full day retreat prior to the reception of Confirmation. Parishes have the option of requiring additional retreats that meet their individual needs.
- f. **Interviews:** Year I = an interview with the candidate at the beginning of the Confirmation process with a member of the Confirmation team is necessary to determine the candidate's readiness, appropriate attitude and adequate understanding of the Confirmation process. Year II = another interview at the beginning of the year with a member of the Confirmation team is strongly recommended in order to ascertain where the candidate is in their journey through the Confirmation process.
- g. **Petition for Confirmation:** Each candidate will write a letter to the Bishop of the Diocese indicating their commitment and readiness to live out their baptismal promises.

## 6. Is ongoing catechesis recommended after Confirmation?

Since Confirmation is a sacrament of initiation, not a graduation, it is essential that ongoing catechesis be provided, and that the newly confirmed avail themselves of such opportunities. They should know that they are obligated to continue their religious education through twelfth grade and beyond in young adult programs and adult formation programs. Ongoing catechesis helps young people deepen their commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to understand faith formation as a lifelong pursuit.

## 7. What kind of catechesis is needed for parents (guardians)?

Catechesis for parents or legal guardian should enable them to:

- share their faith with their son and daughter,
- describe how Confirmation has made a difference in their own life of faith,

- understand the ritual and symbols of Confirmation,
- communicate with their son or daughter about their concerns about Confirmation,
- discern the readiness of their son or daughter to celebrate the sacrament of Confirmation,
- continue in their own faith formation through parish adult formation programs.

#### **8. What kind of catechesis is needed for sponsors?**

Catechesis for the sponsor should enable them to:

- understand the importance of sharing their faith with their candidate,
- know what and how to discuss with their candidate,
- understand the importance of being a good role model in their practice of the faith,
- answer questions their candidate may ask,
- continue in their own faith formation through parish adult formation programs.

### **IV. ADMINISTRATIVE TASKS**

#### **1. Who is responsible for providing the sacramental preparation program?**

- a. The pastor is responsible for providing sacramental preparation for all eligible youth and their parents. Operation of the parish program is usually delegated to the DRE/CRE. The catechist is responsible for the catechetical sessions with the youth. The parents (guardian) are responsible for participating as required, and supporting the efforts made by the catechetical staff.
- b. As with all things, flexibility and pastoral sensitivity to differing family circumstances should be built into the preparation process.

#### **2. How is Confirmation scheduled for each parish?**

Scheduling for the celebration of the sacrament of Confirmation is made with the Office of the Bishop and in conjunction with the diocesan Office of Worship. The Office of Worship sets the guidelines for the celebration of the sacrament and approves the Order of Worship submitted for the celebration.

**3. What if the youth misses the group celebration?**

If a candidate misses the celebration of Confirmation in their parish due to sickness or some other legitimate reason, it is possible that the youth may be confirmed at a later date in a neighboring parish. It is important that they catechetical leader or Confirmation coordinator consult with the pastor in the youth's home parish first. The pastor or catechetical leader can then contact the pastor in the neighboring parish to make arrangements for the youth to be confirmed.

**4. May youth who do not participate in the preparation program still be confirmed?**

Generally, young people who have not participated in the Confirmation preparation program should not be confirmed, since suitable catechesis is important for all wishing to celebrate the sacrament. (canon 843.2)

**5. When should Confirmation be delayed?**

The sacrament of Confirmation should not be delayed unless lack of readiness is clearly indicated. If lack of readiness is clear, Confirmation may be delayed but not refused. If it is delayed, students and parents (guardians) should understand clearly what aspect of readiness needs to be demonstrated, how that might be accomplished and when Confirmation might be expected.

**6. Is a baptismal certificate necessary?**

It is necessary to have a baptismal certificate on file in the parish where the youth will celebrate Confirmation. If the youth has been baptized in another parish, parents (guardians) should request a copy of the certificate at the beginning of Year I. This will ensure sufficient time to have the certificate on file before the celebration. In the case of a youth baptized in another Christian community the baptismal certificate as well as a certificate indicating a Profession of Faith should be provided.

**7. What kind of record is kept of Confirmation? Where? By Whom?**

- a. The parish keeps the Confirmation register in the parish office. The recording is done by the pastor or his designee, and includes the following information: full name of the confirmed, their Confirmation name (optional), mention of the minister who confirmed, the parents' name (and the mother's maiden name), sponsor's name, and place and date of Confirmation.
- b. A notification of Confirmation is also sent to the parish of any student who was baptized in another parish.

- c. The date of Confirmation should also be recorded on the family records in the parish and school programs.
- d. A certificate may be given out at the end of the Confirmation ceremony to the candidates.

## **V. PLANNING THE CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT**

### **1. Who participates in the planning of the celebration?**

The pastor, with assistance from the DRE/CRE, determines those selected to help in the preparation of the ceremony. The team preparing the celebration might include the pastor, DRE/CRE, Confirmation coordinator, catechists, interested parents (guardians) and candidates.

### **2. May the celebration be adapted to meet cultural needs?**

The celebration should be sensitive to different cultural needs. Cultural adaptation may be made as circumstances require and after pastoral consultation.

### **3. Are there any special liturgical requirements for the celebration of Confirmation? Stoles? Nametags? Music? Readers?**

- a. The Bishop sends a letter to parishes, which includes the liturgical requirements. Stoles are not considered appropriate for the celebration of Confirmation. Nametags or cards with the Confirmation name may be worn by the confirmand's. Members of the confirmation class are encouraged to bring up the gifts, read the general intercessions and proclaim the readings.
- b. The responsibility for effective pastoral celebration in the parish community falls upon all those who exercise major roles in the liturgy. "The practical preparation for each liturgical celebration should be done in a spirit of cooperation by all parties concerned, under the guidance of the rector of the church, whether it be ritual, pastoral, or musical matters." In practice this ordinarily means an organized "planning team" or committee which meets regularly to achieve creative and coordinated worship and a good use of the liturgical and musical options of a flexible liturgy. (*The Liturgy Documents*, Volume One pg 248 #10)

**4. What is appropriate attire for Confirmation?**

It is recommended that the boys wear dress slacks, dress aloha shirts or plain dress shirt. Girls should wear a dress or skirt (knee length for both). Candidates should not wear tennis shoes, high tops, strapless dresses or tops, tee shirts, jeans or other inappropriate attire for such a solemn occasion. The pastor and parish catechetical leader should set a parish dress code for their Confirmation candidates.

**5. What Confirmation name should be chosen by the candidate?**

The confirmand's chosen name should be most appropriately be their baptismal name or a Saint's name. The name can be worn on a badge pinned on the left shoulder, or printed on a card to be handed to the priest assisting the Bishop at Confirmation.

**6. Who is the ordinary minister of Confirmation?**

The Diocesan Bishop is the ordinary minister of Confirmation. He may, however, see that another bishop administers the sacrament, or if necessary, he may give the faculty to administer this sacrament to specific priests. (canon 884)