

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

For
CONFIRMATION**CHILDREN'S READINESS:**

Children show readiness to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation when:¹

1. They have sufficient knowledge and careful preparation for the celebration.
2. They regularly attend Sunday Eucharist.
3. They are open to the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
4. Prayer is a part of their daily life.
5. They show a sense of reverence for God.

WHAT DOES CONVERSION OR GROWTH IN FAITH LOOK LIKE IN CHILDREN? ²In General

1. Referring actions to Christ (seeing connections between scripture stories and their faith life)
2. Praying on their own and thinking of seeking God in prayer
3. Charity for others (especially for those who are not their friends)
4. Selfless acts
5. Questions about God
6. Expressing doubts
7. Spontaneous joy at learning about God
8. The desire to know more

In Beginning of Adolescence/Abstract Reasoning (approx. age 10 – 11) to Late Adolescence (approx. age 14)1. *Characteristics:*

1. Changes in body/emotions cause confusion, lack of stability.
2. Can live in polar opposites in the brain.
3. Need for security no longer fulfilled by parent/teacher – must come from inside.
4. Have realized that people can't always be relied upon.
5. Can change very easily at this age: Can experience God deeply one week, big sin the next --- seem to have little repentance (they are testing their limits, not thinking --- parent/catechist/adult reaction is crucial)
6. NOTE: The catechist must address need for security issue/changes in body-emotions; be prepared for these things, have response ready; acknowledging their capacity to be tempted and fall.

2. *Signs of Conversion:*

1. Questions (challenges): want you to prove it to them, reason to believe
2. Want more depth
3. Relying on God as their security
4. Prayer can be more in-depth: more open for/have greater need for spiritual experience

Considerations for Catechesis (Catechesi Tredendae 38)

It is the age of deeper questioning, of anguished or even frustrating searching, of a certain mistrust in others and dangerous introspection...A catechesis capable of leading the adolescent to re-examine his/her life to engage in dialogue, a catechesis that does not ignore the adolescent's great questions - self-giving, belief, love and the means of expressing it constituted by sexuality – such a catechesis can be decisive.

GUIDELINES:***Involvement of the Family***

“Parents are the primary educators in the faith. Together with them, all members of the family play an active part in the education of the younger members.”³ Parents should be more involved in the candidate’s preparation process.⁴ During this opportune time of preparation, parents should be fully engaged in the renewal of their own understanding of the sacrament. Furthermore, active participation in the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist, regular Reconciliation, daily family prayer, and Scripture reading enable families to live the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Although the child has reached the age of reason at the time of preparation for Confirmation, they have not been fully initiated. They lack the strength to be an official witness and disciples of Jesus Christ. Parents must assist the life of holiness.

Unfortunately, many parents do not know this is their role and/or do not feel qualified to teach the Faith and/or indeed uncatechized themselves. For these reasons, the pastors, PREP coordinator and catechists need to assist parents. This assistance can be through the following:

1. Organize two sessions for parents (two-hour each) focused on catechizing the parents.
2. Give a copy of the guideline to assist the child in “Choosing the Confirmation Name.” (*see appendix 1*)⁵
3. Give a copy of “Confirmation Name Report Form” (*see appendix 2*)⁶ to be submitted to the catechist.
4. Give a copy “Who can be a Sponsor?” (*Appendix 3*)⁷ in order for them to assist their child in choosing a sponsor.
5. Give a copy of “Sacrament of Confirmation Review Questions” (*see appendix 4*)⁸ so they can review with their child.
6. The catechist or PREP Coordinator can conduct an “Interview Process” (*see appendix 5*)⁹.

Period of Preparation

Young people need an adequate time of preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation. For the necessary openness, one needs to be receptive to the interior movements of the Holy Spirit.

“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 as well as the parish community”¹⁰

Therefore, a minimum preparation is to be one year, and, if the pastor deems it appropriate, to extend the time of preparation to two years.

CATECHIST'S PREPARATION

The catechist needs to know the essential teachings for Confirmation. The resources recommended by the Archdiocese can be the guideline for content. However, the following are the key points to be emphasized in teaching the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Essential Teachings on the Sacrament of Confirmation

With every doctrine of the Faith there are certain elements that are essential for understanding the teaching. In other words, if the essential element is not taught, the truth will remain unknown. Catechists cannot simply hope that students will pick these up by chance. The doctrines must be presented in a way that is appropriate to their audience.

Confirmation Premise (Foundational Truth):

The completion and perfection of baptismal grace is accomplished in this sacrament, by which the faithful are strengthened by the Holy Spirit, bound more closely to the Church and are thus more fully prepared to receive His Body and Blood. (CCC 1285,1302)

The Essential Concepts to Explain:

1. Why Jesus gave us this sacrament?
2. Communicate the relationship between the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist)
3. The seal (CCC 698, 1295,1296, 1304,1306).
4. Spiritual maturity, being a disciple and witness (CCC 1308).
5. Requirements for reception (CCC 1385-1388).
6. The effects of this sacrament (CCC 1303,1316).
7. The Holy Spirit is a Person, the Third Person of the Trinity (CCC 685).
8. A relationship with the Holy Spirit is necessary for all believers (CCC 683); He is "the interior Master of Christian prayer" (CCC 2672).
9. Confirmation preparation is the time to involve the entire parish community as guide and support.

*Appendix 1***Choosing A Confirmation Name**

One of the favourite aspects of preparing for Confirmation is the choosing of a Confirmation name. In this custom, the one preparing for Confirmation takes the name of a person who has officially been declared a saint, blessed, or venerable or who is one of the faithful from the Bible. One may also chose to be confirmed under his or her own name given at Baptism. In Confirmation, the bishop uses this name, saying, "N., be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit." As parents, you will need to assist your child in choosing a Confirmation name.

How do I help my child choose a Confirmation name?**1. Life-time saint friends.**

Help your child to understand that they are not simply choosing a name they like, but they are asking a saint to be their friend for the rest of their lives. We call these life-time saint friends "patrons." Patrons help us live as Christians both through their praying for us (intercession) and their good example (witness) (cf. CCC 2156, 956).

2. Read stories about the Saints.

More than likely, your child will not know too many saints. Take time read the lives of the saints. There are many different books on saints. The internet also has many different websites on the saints. One place to start is to search websites like the following:

- <http://www.catholic-forum.com/saints/indexsn1.htm>
- <http://www.catholic.org/saints/calendar>
- <http://qnm.org/saintscalendar>

You might start your reading with a saint that has similar interests or with one of the saints from the curriculum. Sometimes, patrons are chosen because of the day their feast day falls on, e.g. if your child's birthday is on November 3, they might chose Martin for St. Martin de Porres. Sometimes, patrons might be chosen because of family ties, e.g. the child's grandpa's name is Mark, grandpa is a great, so the child chooses St. Mark. You might even start with your own baptismal name. There are many different starting points for choosing a particular saint. Ultimately, the patron chosen should be someone that your child wants to imitate in their love for Christ and others.

3. Choose a Saint

After researching, pick a saint. Let the parish know the saint you have chosen by completing the Confirmation Name Report Form and giving it to the catechist (your child's religion teacher).

4. Ask the Saint

The child should ask the saint to be their friend (patron). As parents, you might encourage them to write a letter to the saint. You might also encourage them to be friends with the saint. Teach your child to ask for the saint's intercession, get them a picture or statue of the saint, read more about the saint, etc.

5. Practice telling the Saint's story.

Your child will be asked why they chose the particular patron. They should be able to explain who the saint is, how they were a faithful disciple and witness of Jesus Christ, and what they hope to imitate in their own lives as a disciple and witness.

Appendix 2

Confirmation Name Report Form

DIRECTIONS: After finding a saint that inspires your faith, complete the form below and give it to your catechist (your religion teacher). Your parents should help you.

What saint have you asked to be your friend? _____

When is his/her feast day? _____ Where was the saint born? _____

How many brothers and sisters did the saint have? _____

Name two ways that the saint was a disciple and witness of Jesus Christ? _____

Why did you choose this saint to be your friend? _____

PLEASE PRINT

Candidate's First Name: _____

Candidate's Last Name: _____

Candidate's Confirmation Name: _____

Parent's Name: _____ Parent's Signature: _____

Date Signed: _____

*Appendix 3***Who Can Be A Sponsor?**

One of the tasks of being confirmed is to choose a sponsor. Some people pick their best friend, others a relative and still others want to choose the right person. For the latter, the task of choosing a sponsor may be quite challenging. Who do I choose? How do I ask them? Why do I have even need a sponsor? Thankfully, the Church has provided the answers to all of these questions. A list of resources has been provided at the bottom of this page.

Do I really need a sponsor?

Yes. Everyone needs help living the Christian life. Sponsors, along with parents, have the duty of helping you to follow Jesus Christ.

Who can be a sponsor?

The first criterion is that the person who is asked to be a sponsor must be willing and able to help you live your life as a Christian. Do they love Jesus like you want to love Jesus? Do they love others like you want to love others? Ideally, this person would be the same person who acted as your godparent at baptism. If you had two godparents, you can even ask them both.

Specifically, the church requires that sponsors: (Canon 874)

- must be sixteen years old
- may not be the natural or adoptive parents of the confirmand
- must be fully initiated into the Catholic Faith (Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist)
- must be leading a life in harmony with the Catholic Faith
- must be free of any canonical impediment

From this list, you can see that some times a best friend or favourite relative is not the right choice for being a sponsor. Not everyone can be a sponsor. Be sure to ask your parish priest if the person you choose would be a good sponsor.

How do I ask someone to be my sponsor?

Just ask. Let them know why you are asking them. If they say, yes, then put them in contact with your Parish Priest or PREP Coordinator.

Once your sponsor has been approved, invite them to be-involved with your preparation. Find a chance to go to Mass together; invite them to your class, pray with and for one another, attend the retreat, etc.

For more information, refer to:

Rite of Christian Initiation(RCIA), Introduction, 5-6; *Code of Canon Law*, 872-874,892-893; *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* 1311; and the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, Introduction, 10.2.

*Appendix 4***Sacrament of Confirmation Review Questions**

DIRECTION: Parents lead a discussion with their child to review the sacrament of Confirmation.

1. What is the sacrament of the Confirmation?

It is special outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon you so you can become amore faithful disciple and a stronger witness of Jesus. With Confirmation you are more fully prepared to receive the Eucharist, Jesus' Body and Blood.

2. When does the Holy Spirit first come to dwell within you?

The Holy Spirit first comes to dwell within you at Baptism. In Confirmation, you receive the fullness and strength of the Holy Spirit.

3. Do you see the Holy Spirit in Confirmation?

You will see the bishop anoint you with the oil called Holy Chrism and lay his hands upon you. You will hear the bishop say, "Be sealed with the Holy Spirit."

4. Why does the Holy Chrism oil smell?

The Holy Chrism oil smells as a sign that your whole life - every thought, word, deed and hope -- will spread the aroma of Christ (2 Cor. 2:15).

5. What does it mean to be "sealed with the Holy Spirit?"

A seal is like a label or a tattoo or a mark. You cannot see the seal with your eyes though, but the seal is there. The seal of the Holy Spirit shows that you belong totally to Jesus Christ and His Family, the Church. The seal of the Holy Spirit also shows the promise that God will always protect you.

6. What other sacraments you should have received before receiving Confirmation?

Baptism, Reconciliation and Eucharist.

7. What happens when I receive Baptism?

Original sin and all my sins and their punishments are washed away. Then, the Holy Spirit comes to live inside me and I become a Child of God. Baptism leaves an indelible mark on my soul.

8. What is an indelible mark?

An indelible mark can never, ever, ever be removed.

9. What happens in the sacrament of Reconciliation?

Reconciliation is the way Jesus has given to me to start over. In Reconciliation my sins that I commit after I am baptized are forgiven. A good confession is the sure way to be in the state of grace before receiving Communion and Confirmation.

10. What happens when I receive Confirmation?

I am more firmly united with Jesus and His Family the Church as a Child of God. I receive the power of the Holy Spirit. I am given the strength I need to live as a disciple and witness of Jesus Christ. Confirmation leaves an indelible mark on my soul, just like Baptism.

11. Why does the Holy Spirit strengthen you in Confirmation?

The Holy Spirit strengthens you in Confirmation so you will be able to be Jesus' disciple and witness in everything you say and do. Not only with your family and at church, but also with your friends, classmates, teachers and with people you don't even know. Through Confirmation, you will have the strength to be a disciple and witness even when it is difficult.

12. What does it mean to be more fully united with Jesus and His Family, the Church?

To unite means to be joined together. When we are united with Jesus and His Family, the Church, we are more closely joined to Him and His Family.

13. What is the Church?

The Church is the Family of God.

14. Who belongs to the Church, the Family of God?

The Family of God includes the saints in heaven, the souls in purgatory and the faithful on earth.

15. What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus?

A disciple of Jesus is someone who is committed to always seeking to know Jesus and His Family, the Church better and better. Some of the ways a disciple seeks to know Jesus better is through receiving the sacraments, reading Scripture, studying, praying and asking questions.

16. What does it mean to be a witness of Jesus?

A witness of Jesus is someone who thinks, judges, acts and hopes as Jesus in their own lives.

17. What must I do to receive Confirmation?

- a. Be in the state of grace. Have no serious sin on my soul. (going to Reconciliation)
- b. Renew my baptismal promises.
- c. Be prepared to be a disciple and witness of Christ.
- d. Pray to receive the strength and graces of the Holy Spirit.

18. How many times can I be confirmed?

You only need to be confirmed just once like you only need to be baptized once. Both last forever.

19. Did the Holy Spirit ever come upon Jesus?

Yes. One time that the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus was immediately after Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. The Holy Spirit came upon Jesus in the form of a dove and then a voice from heaven proclaimed, "This is my beloved Son." The full story is in Matthew 3:13-17.

20. What did Jesus do after the Holy Spirit came upon Him?

After the Holy Spirit came upon Him, Jesus went into the desert. In the desert, Jesus fasted and prayed for forty days. Then the devil came to tempt Jesus to turn away from God. Jesus resisted the devil and his temptations. So, the devil left. Jesus then left the desert to proclaim the Good News about the Kingdom of God, the Father.

21. Were Peter and the other apostles filled with the Holy Spirit?

Yes. At Pentecost, ten days after Jesus has ascended to the Father.

22. What happened to the apostles after they were filled with the power of the Holy Spirit?

First, the apostles were no longer afraid to talk about Jesus to other people, so that others could decide to follow Jesus. This story is in Acts 2. Second, the apostles also baptized and confirmed all those who believed their preaching.

23. Who did Jesus give the power to do Confirmation?

The Twelve Apostles and their successors, the bishops.. Sometimes, the bishop might also have priests help him. Priests also have the power to confirm when all three Sacraments of Initiation are celebrated as is often seen at the Easter Vigil.

24. How do bishops get this power from Jesus today?

Through the sacrament of Holy Orders.

25. Be able to discuss your Confirmation name. Here are some possible questions.

What saint have you asked to be your friend?

How did you ask the saint to be your friend?

Name two ways that the .saint was a disciple and witness of Jesus Christ?

Why did you choose this saint to be your friend?

Why do we need friends in heaven?

When is their feast day? Where was the saint born? How old was the saint when they died?

How many brothers and sisters did the saint have? ...

Appendix 5

**Confirmation
Conducting the Interview**

Choose a format that will work for your parish. Consider the availability of the pastor, parents and catechist. The interview is NOT a quiz, there's no failing grade. It is primarily to evangelize the children and more importantly their parents.

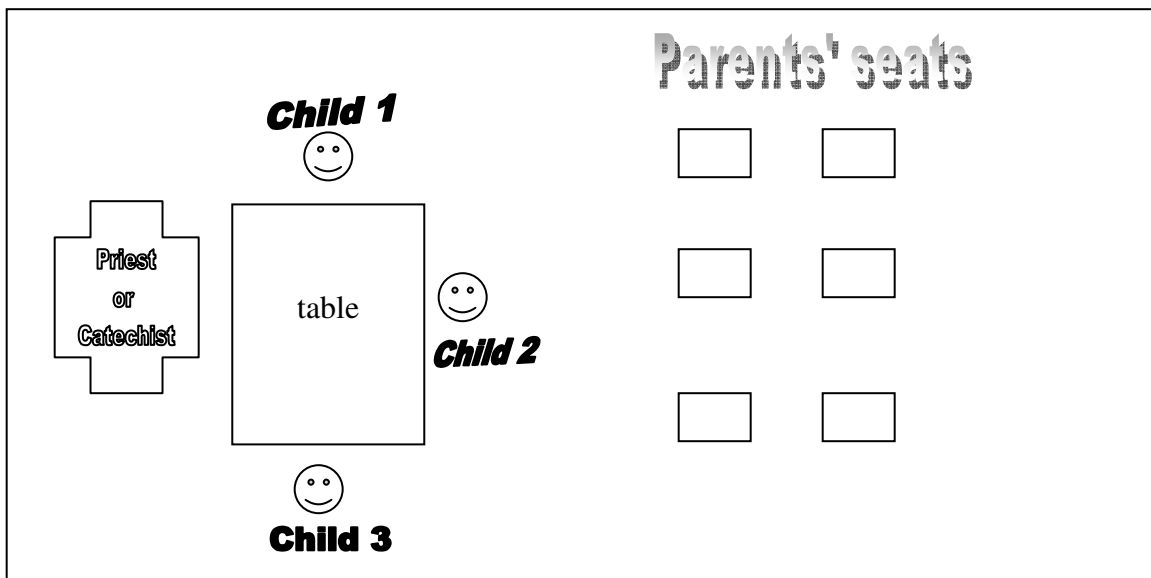
Format 1: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Prior to the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation, the parish priest or designated catechist should interview each child to assess his or her readiness and intention for receiving the sacrament, keeping in mind that a separate interview will be conducted for First Eucharist. The interview should be conducted in such a way that the child feels comfortable. The interview should not feel like a test, but rather a time to understand if the child is ready and if not, to determine what needs to be explained more completely. The interview might also be a time for the child to explain why they chose the patron saint they chose.

Both parents **should** be present during the interview, but should not answer the questions for the child. Under no circumstance should the priest or designated catechist meet with the child alone behind a closed door. This precaution is to avoid any chance of accusations of misconduct.

Format 2: GROUP INTERVIEWS

It may be possible to interview more than one child at a time. The priest or designated catechist could have 2 or 3 children along with both of their parents come together for the interview. This would create a group of 10 people. In this model, it may be helpful to have the parents sit behind the students while the children and the priest or catechist sit around a table. This allows the parents to observe their children's answers without having the children being intimidated by other adults in the room. (see diagram)



Appendix 6

Possible Confirmation Interview Questions

Following is a list of possible interview questions. Unless there are very few confirmands, you will not be able to ask every child every question.

1. Hi, (name of student) how are you doing today? or how was school today? or in larger parishes, the child might be asked about their family or their interests. In short, ask a few questions to put the child at ease. Remember these are children and they may be quite nervous about meeting with you.
2. What sacrament have you been preparing to receive?
3. Who did we get this sacrament from? When did we get this sacrament? Why did Jesus give us this?
4. How do bishops get this power from Jesus today?
5. What are some effects of Confirmation?
6. What does it mean to be more fully united with Jesus and with the Church? What is the Church? Who belongs to the Church?
7. How does Confirmation help us to live as disciples of Jesus?to live as witnesses of Jesus?
8. What is an indelible spiritual mark?
9. How do you prepare to receive Confirmation? How many times do you receive Confirmation?
10. Do you see the Holy Spirit in Confirmation?
11. Why does the Holy Chrism oil smell?
12. What does it mean to be "sealed with the Holy Spirit?"
13. What sacraments do you receive before receiving Confirmation? What happens when you receive Baptism? What happens in the sacrament of Reconciliation? What happens when you receive Holy Communion?
14. Did the Holy Spirit ever come upon Jesus? What did Jesus do after the Holy Spirit came upon Him?
15. Were Peter and the other apostles filled with the Holy Spirit? What happened to Peter and the apostles after they were filled with the power of the Holy Spirit?
16. Discuss the saint they have chosen. Here are some possible questions: What saint have you asked to be your friend? How did you ask the saint to be your friend? Name two ways that the saint was a disciple and witness of Jesus Christ? Why did you choose this saint to be your friend? Why do we need friends in heaven?

¹ *Call to Celebrate Sacraments Source Book*, (Orlando, FL: Harcourt Religion Publishing, 2007) page 33

² Adapted from the flyer of Diocese of La Crosse for “The Sacrament of Reconciliation.”

³ General directory for Catechesis #255

⁴ Synod Preliminary Recommendation line n. 193

⁵ Handbook for Pastors and Catechists on Preparing Children for Confirmation, Diocese of Fargo, p. 46

⁶ Ibid, p. 47

⁷ Ibid, p. 45

⁸ Ibid, pp. 48-50

⁹ Ibid, adapted from “Conducting the Interview”, p. 69

¹⁰ Catechism of the Catholic Church No. 1309