

Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana Guidelines for the Reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation (Youth)

Preamble

“Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, who went down and prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for it had not yet fallen on any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.” (*Acts 8:14-17, NABRE*)

The sacrament of Confirmation is not the end of the journey; it provides sacramental grace for a life-long journey with Christ. The Confirmation guidelines in the Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana are not a program in itself, but a recommendation for developing a program to meet expectations. As part of the universal call to holiness Confirmation preparation is to be an integral part of that call to perfect our baptismal grace.

Introduction

“Confirmation perfects Baptismal grace; it is the sacrament which gives the Holy Spirit, incorporates us more firmly into Christ, strengthens our bond with the Church, associates us more closely with her mission, and helps us bear witness to the Christian faith in words accompanied by deeds.” (*CCC 1316*)

Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation together constitute the sacraments of Christian initiation whose unity must be safeguarded. The sacrament of Confirmation is a powerful moment of grace, conversion, and renewal of faith in the life of the Church. Pastors and shepherds of souls should welcome the candidates for Confirmation with joy and acceptance. Every effort should be made to deal pastorally with those who come to request the sacrament of Confirmation. The purpose of these guidelines is to assist clergy and Confirmation coordinators in the Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana to fulfill their role in a positive and pastoral Christ-like manner. These guidelines for the sacrament of Confirmation are for validly baptized young people of catechetical age outside the scope of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*.

Norms

Bishop

It is noted in the suggested homily for the *Rite of Confirmation* that Bishops are successors of the Apostles. Therefore they have the power of giving the Holy Spirit to the baptized either personally or through the priests they appoint.

“The diocesan bishop is to administer confirmation personally or is to take care that another bishop administers it. If necessity requires it, he can grant the faculty to one or more specific presbyters, who are to administer this sacrament.” (*CIC 884.1*)

“The diocesan bishop is obliged to take care that the sacrament of Confirmation is conferred on subjects who properly and reasonably seek it.” (CIC 885.1)

Pastor

“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.” (CIC 890)

1. Pastors have an integral role in preparing young people for the reception of the sacrament of Confirmation. A priest’s regular presence is proper throughout formation.
2. The pastor and Confirmation coordinator will work together in developing and implementing a comprehensive program for the parish.

Confirmation Coordinator

Confirmation Coordinators “should have theological formation as well as competence and experience in catechesis. They should be able to lead and guide young people to grow in the knowledge of the Catholic faith, in the practice of that faith in light of the principles of Christian morality and social justice, in the celebration of the sacraments, and in the development of their spiritual lives...should be practicing Catholics who live the Gospel in all aspects of their lives. They should be models of Christian living for the young people they serve and have the ability to speak credibly about their personal experience of the gift of faith.” (NDC 54, B, 6)

1. The role of the Confirmation coordinator may be filled by the pastoral associate, director of religious education, youth minister, master catechist, or anyone delegated by the pastor.
2. The pastor and Confirmation coordinator will work together in developing and implementing a comprehensive program for the parish.
3. The Confirmation coordinator will be present throughout formation.

Catechists

“Catechists need to be practicing Catholics who participate fully in the communal worship and life of the Church and who have been prepared for their apostolate by appropriate catechetical training. Their commissioning by the Church is a participation in the divine calling to teach as Jesus did. Their personal relationship with Jesus Christ energizes their service to the Church and provides the continuing motivation, vitality, and force of their catechetical activity.” (NDC 54, B, 8).

Candidates for Confirmation (Confirmands)

“Every baptized person not yet confirmed and only such a person is capable of receiving confirmation.” (CIC 889.1)

“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 the baptismal promises.” (CIC 889.2)

“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 judgment of the minister a grave cause suggests otherwise.” (CIC 891)

1. Young people receiving the sacrament of Confirmation must have reached their 13th birthday by the reception of the sacrament.
2. Young people must be active members of the Church as noted in the Precepts of the Church.
 - a. You shall attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days....
 - b. You shall confess your sins at least once a year.
 - c. You shall receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at least during the Easter season.
 - d. You shall observe the days of fasting and abstinence established by the Church.
 - e. You shall help to provide for the needs of the Church. (CCC 2042)
3. It is expected that all Confirmation candidates participate in parish Confirmation formation. This includes public school, Catholic school, and home school youth.

Sponsors

“To be permitted to take on the function of sponsor a person must:

1. be designated by the one to be baptized (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;
2. have completed the sixteenth year of age, unless the diocesan bishop has established another age, or the pastor or minister has granted an exception for a just cause;
3. 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;
4. not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared; and
5. not be the father or mother of the one to be confirmed.” (CIC 874.1)

“A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community is not to participate except together with a Catholic sponsor and then only as a witness.” (CIC 874-2)

“It is desirable to choose as sponsor the one who undertook the same function in baptism.” (CIC 893.2)

1. Sponsors must have celebrated their 16th birthday.
2. Sponsors should be encouraged (not required) to be actively involved in the Confirmation process.
3. Sponsors must be present at the Confirmation liturgy or designate a proxy.
4. Potential sponsors from a parish different from the candidate must provide a certificate of verification from their current parish or pastor. This certificate verifies that the sponsor is a fully initiated Catholic and in good standing with the Church.

5. Appropriate catechesis for sponsors should be provided before or during the candidate's catechetical formation for the sacrament of Confirmation. The content of this catechesis should include:
 - a. the theology of the Sacraments of Initiation;
 - b. the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian disciple; and
 - c. the significant role of the sponsor in the life of the candidate.

Parents

“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.” (CIC 890)

1. As the primary catechist, parents are expected to be involved in the Confirmation process.
2. Parents must attend appropriate catechesis before or during the candidate's catechetical formation for the sacrament of Confirmation. The content of this catechesis should include:
 - a. the theology of the Sacraments of Initiation;
 - b. the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian disciple; and
 - c. the significant role of the parent as promised during the Rite of Baptism.
3. Parent formation should include a minimum of two catechetical sessions, on-going formation, and support throughout the Confirmation process.

Formation

Definition: The process by which the candidate for confirmation is conformed to the image of Christ by the working of the Holy Spirit enabling them, as a fully initiated disciple of Christ, to labor for the transformation of the world.

Reasoning: Immediate **“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, his biddings – in order to be more capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities of Christian Life.” (CCC 1309).**

Goal: **“To this end catechesis for Confirmation should strive to awaken a sense of belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ, the universal Church as well as the parish community.” (CCC 1309)**

1. Sunday Mass attendance, in addition to classes and one retreat, is an expectation in Confirmation formation and parishes should emphasize this in the program.
2. The candidate for the sacrament of Confirmation is expected to have participated in yearly ongoing faith formation since his / her reception of First Eucharist to assure a continuous, systematic, age appropriate catechesis.
 - a. When this is not the case, the candidate should complete one (school) year of formal catechesis, either in a parish faith formation program, Catholic school, or

Catholic home school, immediately prior to the time of the reception of the sacrament.

- b. The parish should make provision for an interim (catch up) program of catechesis for young persons who do not meet this requirement.
3. The free-standing, parish-conducted, one (school) year Confirmation formation program must be distinguished from the ordinarily required one year prerequisite foundational religious education program.
4. Whether the formation program is accomplished through an off-site retreat, an on-site classroom, or some other model determined appropriate by the Pastor, the parish Confirmation program should occur independently from the on-going religious education program (which should continue throughout one academic year, whether accomplished in a Catholic school, a parish religious education program, or a home school religious education program).
5. **“Dioceses and parishes should present catechesis for the Sacrament of Confirmation that:**
 - a. Teaches that Confirmation increases and deepens the grace of Baptism, imprinting an indelible character on the soul;
 - b. Teaches 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, increase in them the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and help them bear witness to the Christian faith in words and deeds;
 - c. Teaches about the role of the Holy Spirit, his gifts, and his fruits;
 - d. Is developmentally appropriate and includes [a] retreat experiences [an overnight retreat may not be required as a condition for receiving Confirmation];
 - e. Includes 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;
 - f. Ensures that parents and sponsors are involved in the catechetical preparation of the children for Confirmation; and
 - g. Teaches that the bishop is the ordinary minister of the Sacrament of Confirmation...” (NDC 36, A, 2)
6. The delivery of the formation information may vary from each parish as determined by the pastor and Confirmation coordinator of the parish.
7. Parish preparation for the reception of Confirmation is to include a retreat experience appropriate to the age level of the candidate. The retreat experience is expected to be a retreat that is Catholic faith based, either within or away from the parish. An overnight retreat is not to be a requirement for Confirmation.
8. Parish preparation for the reception of Confirmation may include hours of stewardship. However, 30 hours is the maximum that may be required and transit time will be counted.
9. The total catechetical hours including the retreat are to be at least 20 catechetical contact hours and not to exceed 40 catechetical contact hours.
10. All catechetical materials and textbooks used in preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation must be approved by the USCCB. These materials are found to be in conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.
11. **“To receive Confirmation one must be in a state of grace. One should receive the Sacrament of Penance in order to be cleansed for the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (CCC 1310)**

12. The selection of a saint's name is a doorway to reflection and prayer. The saint must be recognized on the Church's official roster of saints. The saint's name must be used in the formal format out of respect, no truncated names or nicknames are to be used. The candidates should know the correct pronunciation of the saint's name and a general biography of that saint's witness to Christ.

Mystagogy

Definition: Leading those who have been initiated into the faith, into its deeper meaning and significance for their lives.

Reasoning: “A candidate for Confirmation who has attained the age of reason must profess the faith, be in the state of grace, have the intention of receiving the sacrament, and be prepared to assume the role of disciple and witness to Christ, both within the ecclesial community and in temporal affairs.” (CCC 1319)

Goal: To help the newly confirmed discern their God-given gifts and provide opportunities to learn about and live out their faith through discipleship in the parish, in the community, and in the world.

1. Appropriate and ongoing catechesis (mystagogy) must be provided to the newly confirmed at the parish level as well as an invitation to parish and community ministry appropriate to the abilities of the newly confirmed. This insures an opportunity for continued faith formation and Christian discipleship.
2. In addition to these mystagogy sessions, young people are encouraged to continue participation in faith formation / youth group following Confirmation.

Record of Confirmation

1. “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 a record book in the parish archive; the pastor must advise the pastor of the place of Baptism about the conferral of Confirmation so that notation be made in the Baptismal Register.” (CIC 895)
2. The book used to record parish Confirmations should be of archival quality.
3. When a confirmation takes place at the Cathedral, the parish records should indicate it took place at the Cathedral and recorded at the home parish (parish of baptism).

Pastoral Notes

1. The USCCB statement issued in 1995 that is “entitled *Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities* stresses the need to include persons with disabilities in the celebration of all sacraments and provides general catechetical guidelines for celebrating the sacraments with persons with a variety of disabilities.” (NDC 35, C)
2. The pastor or his delegate should contact the Office of the Bishop to schedule the sacrament of Confirmation for their parish.

3. The pastor or his delegate must fill out the sacrament of Confirmation checklist and return it to the Office of the Bishop.
4. Rather than make a candidate miss the local Confirmation because of an unanticipated illness or injury, the pastor or his delegate should contact the Office of the Bishop if Confirmation in the home or a hospital would be opportune.
5. Consult the preparation form for Mass with the Bishop, paying particular attention to the guidelines for Confirmation Mass with the Bishop when planning the parish liturgy.
6. The procession of candidates during the actual reception of Confirmation is to be done two-by-two (with sponsors being immediately behind each candidate). This is to be done in two lines so that the bishop may confirm “right to left” without waiting for candidates to come forward.
7. Candidates and sponsors are not asked to be part of the entrance procession and the recessional.
8. At the pastor’s discretion, sacramental preparation may occur at another parish or Catholic school.
9. These *Guidelines for the Reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation (Youth)* are effective in the Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana beginning August 1, 2013.

References Cited

CCC – *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CIC – *Code of Canon Law*

NDC – *National Directory for Catechesis*

NABRE – *New American Bible, Revised Edition*