

Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana

Guidelines for the Reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation (Adult)

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*)

As part of the universal call to holiness Adult Confirmation preparation is to be an integral part of that call to perfect our baptismal grace. The sacrament of Confirmation provides sacramental grace for continuing our life-long journey with Christ. These guidelines are to ensure adequate formation of adults seeking to live the life of a confirmed Catholic.

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 Adult 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 Adult 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, active, and Catholic adults 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)

1. This means because rights and obligations are always paired, the bishop has a right and obligation to administer the sacrament, which means that the candidate has a right to be confirmed by the bishop and should be told this.

Pastor

“...pastors of souls, especially pastors of parishes, are to take care that the faithful are properly instructed to receive the sacrament ...” (CIC 890)

1. Pastors have an integral role in preparing adult parishioners for the reception of the sacrament of Confirmation. A priest’s regular presence is proper throughout formation.
2. Pastors need to ensure that candidates for Adult Confirmation are Catholics in good standing and properly disposed.
3. The pastor and Adult Confirmation coordinator will work together in developing and implementing a comprehensive program for the parish.

Adult Confirmation Coordinator

Adult Confirmation Coordinators “...Only fully initiated, practicing Catholics who fully adhere to the Church’s teaching in faith and morals and who are models of Christian virtue and courageous witnesses to the Catholic faith should be designated... Preparation for service ...should include advanced studies in theology, Scripture, Liturgy, catechesis and catechetical methodology, educational psychology and theory, and administration, as well as practical catechetical experience with adults...” (NDC 54, B, 5)

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

“Those responsible for catechesis should identify the members of the community who can serve as catechists for adults and should provide for their training, formation, and spiritual enrichment.” (NDC 48, A, 4)

Candidates for Adult 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)

1. Adults receiving the sacrament of Confirmation must have reached their 18th birthday and no longer in high school by the reception of the sacrament.
2. Adults 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. Adults must provide a copy of their baptismal certificate for verification to the pastor or his delegate.
4. It is expected that all Adult Confirmation candidates participate in the parish Adult Confirmation formation.

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)

“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 obligations inherent in this sacrament.” (CIC 892)

“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 formation 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 the significant role of the sponsor in the life of the candidate.

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 is an expectation in Adult Confirmation formation and parishes should emphasize this in the program.
2. 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 adult faith formation.
3. “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 [may] include retreat experiences;
 - 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 ...sponsors are involved in the catechetical preparation...; and
 - g. Teaches that the bishop is the ordinary minister of the Sacrament of Confirmation...” (NDC 36, A, 2)
4. The delivery of the formation information may vary from each parish as determined by the pastor and Adult Confirmation coordinator of the parish.

5. All catechetical materials used in preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation must be in conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.
6. “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)
7. The selection of a saint’s name is a doorway to reflection and prayer. The candidates should know the correct pronunciation of the saint’s name and a general biography of that saint’s witness to Christ. “Parents, sponsors, and the pastor are to take care that a name foreign to Christian sensibility is not given.” (CIC 855)

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. Provide follow-up with the newly confirmed to reflect on their Confirmation experience and encourage them to continue their growth and service.
3. In addition to these mystagogy sessions, expectations include continued participation in adult faith formation 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 home parish Confirmation register should indicate the sacrament took place at the Cathedral. The home parish is also responsible for notifying the parish of baptism of the place and date of Confirmation.

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 if there are any extenuating circumstances regarding the sacrament of Confirmation.
3. Rather than make a candidate miss the diocesan adult 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.
4. At the pastor’s discretion, sacramental preparation may occur at another parish.
5. These *Guidelines for the Reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation (Adult)* 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*