

Planning for and Administering the Sacrament of Confirmation to Youth in the Diocese of St. Augustine

Introduction. The *Rite of Confirmation* (2016, revised translation) provides the pastoral context, texts, and rubrics for the celebration of the rite. The rite, however, is to be understood as part of the unity of the Sacraments of Initiation. As such, preparation for and the celebration of Confirmation is the concern and responsibility of the whole parish. This presumes the active involvement, participation, and collaboration of candidates, families, sponsors, pastor, catechists, and parish members.

The Parish. As the initiating community, preparation for the celebration of Confirmation needs to be addressed to the whole parish. The entire parish is part of its celebration. Pastoral preparation can include the use of bulletins, preaching and other ways that invite the community's participation. Prayer for the candidates can be included in the Universal Prayer and other times of parish prayer. Liturgies of the Word, the communal celebration of the Sacrament of Penance or Penitential Service with candidates, parents, sponsors, and the parish community might also be appropriate means of parish preparation. The *Apostolic Constitution on the Sacrament of Confirmation, the Rite of Christian Initiation, the Roman Missal*, and *Lectionary* contain resources, references, explanations, and texts that can be used for this pastoral preparation.

The Candidate. The age for Confirmation has changed throughout history to meet the needs of the Christian Community. The revised *Rite of Confirmation* permits the Conference of Bishops to designate the age when Confirmation will be celebrated. The USCCB has determined that each Bishop shall establish the age for Confirmation in his diocese. The policy in the Diocese of St. Augustine is to confirm youth who are eighth grade and up, with provisions for special circumstances to be determined by the local pastors in conversation with the Bishop. Two consecutive years of remote preparation precedes the reception of any sacrament by youth in the Diocese of St. Augustine. Likewise, between 12 and 18 hours of immediate preparation in addition to the classroom instruction is the norm in the Diocese of St. Augustine. (see section on **Catechist and Catechesis** for more detail.)

Adult Catholics, age 18 and up, are confirmed at one of two Adult Confirmations celebrated each year.

Parents. Parental involvement in the young person's faith life is part of the responsibility and role accepted at the time of the Baptism. The rites and diocesan guidelines presume parental involvement in the preparation and celebration of Confirmation. The family, as the domestic church, teaches the values of living faith through its participation in Sunday Mass, ongoing formation in the faith, prayer, and self-giving service to others. Parent meetings can assist in: affirming these roles; helping parents understand the relationship between Confirmation, Baptism and Eucharist; clarifying the parish policy, and the canonical requirements.

Sponsors. Each candidate is to have a sponsor. It is the responsibility of the sponsor to assist the candidate in their faith journey and encourage the confirmed person to mature in Christian faith and witness. To be admitted to the role of sponsor a person must:

- have completed their 16th year
- be a Catholic who has been confirmed and admitted to the Eucharist as well as one who:
 - ~leads a life in harmony with the faith and the role undertaken as sponsor.
 - ~not bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared;
 - ~not be the father or mother of the one to be confirmed. (Code of Canon Law 874)

Sponsors unknown to the pastor are to provide written evidence from their parish that they fulfill these requirements. The rite suggests the sponsor of Baptism continue in this role at Confirmation. This presumes that the person still meets the requirements of Canon 874. Sponsors should be identified as soon as possible prior to immediate preparation so that they can be fully involved in the preparation of the candidate for the Sacrament.

Pastor. The pastor guides and leads the parish in its preparation for this outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the people entrusted to his care. The pastor should see to it that the parish, its ministers and staff, the candidates, the sponsors and the families understand the meaning of this sacramental celebration. It is most appropriate that the pastor and other parochial clergy meet with candidates, in both private and group settings, to interview them and share with them the support of the faith community. The pastor may wish to explain the meaning of the rite and assist in preparation for its celebration. It should also be the pastor's concern that those who are given the gift of the Spirit are provided opportunities to serve the parish in its worship and mission in their years following Confirmation.

It is the pastor's responsibility to see to it that the names of those confirmed, and the names of parents and sponsors, date and place of confirmation and minister are recorded in the parish records. Chancery records are to be completed and returned within two weeks of the Confirmation, on the form provided by the Bishop's Office.

Bishop. As the ordinary minister of Confirmation, Bishop Pohlmeier wishes to be acquainted with the candidates he will be confirming. Candidates write to the Bishop prior to their Confirmation as a way of introducing themselves to him. Letters should be received by Bishop Pohlmeier ***three weeks prior*** to the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation. For mailing purposes:

Most Reverend Erik T. Pohlmeier
Bishop, Diocese of St. Augustine
11625 Old St. Augustine Road
Jacksonville, FL 32258

If Bishop Estévez is the confirming Bishop, letters should be addressed to him and sent to his attention at the same address above.

Letters themselves should be one side of a plain sheet of paper and typed. These letters should not be placed in sealed envelopes. It is expected that the Director of Religious Education or another delegate of the pastor has taken proper care that these letters are written well and reflect the sincerity of the candidate for Confirmation.

These are the questions Bishop Pohlmeier desires the youth to reflect upon in their letters:

- 1. In what ways has the preparation for the Sacrament helped you?**
- 2. How does the Church understand the Eucharist? What does the Eucharist mean to you personally?**
- 3. What are the challenges young people today are facing? How will Confirmation help you with these challenges?**
- 4. What is your basic prayer life? Both as an individual and as part of a family?**
- 5. Describe briefly the life of your Confirmation Saint and why you chose them.**

Other Clergy. Concelebration is encouraged on the part of the parish priest(s). Deacons, as well, should serve at the altar.

Catechist and the Catechesis. It is important that catechists and others involved in the formation of candidates be diocesan certified catechists who are familiar with the *Rite of Confirmation (2016)*.

There are two parts in the preparation of candidates for this Sacrament:

1. Remote preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation is done in the Catholic School, the Parish School of Religion or in the home by homeschooling families.

2. The immediate preparation,

which is necessary directly prior to the reception of the Sacrament, is done at the parish by all youth from the groups mentioned above. Immediate preparation is centered in the life of the parish. The immediate preparation can take the form of a series of retreats, a series of additional classroom sessions and must contain some formational aspect for the parents and the family as a unit.

Immediate preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation (a maximum of between 18 - 24 hours) includes the following:

- ✠ Teaches that Confirmation increases and deepens the grace of baptism, imprinting an indelible character on the soul.
- ✠ Teaches that Confirmation strengthen the baptismal conferral of the Holy Spirit on those confirmed 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 (CCC #1303), and help them bear witness to the Christian faith in words and deeds.
- ✠ Teaches about the role of the Holy Spirit, his gifts and his fruits.
- ✠ Is developmentally appropriate and includes retreat experiences.

- ✠ Includes instruction in the Rite of Confirmation and its basic symbols: the Imposition of hands, the anointing with Sacred Chrism, and the words of the sacramental formula.
- ✠ Ensures that parents and sponsors are involved in the catechetical preparation of the children for Confirmation.
- ✠ Teaches that the bishop is the ordinary minister of the Sacrament of Confirmation.
(*National Directory for Catechesis* p. 123)

There should be one main text used and it must be on the USCCB List of Textbooks found to be in Conformity with the Catechism Supplemental materials can be added as needed.

The Confirmation Retreat should focus on the above preparation statements. A sample Confirmation Retreat outline is available on the www.dosaformation.com website, under "Sacraments." This document lists all requirements of a Confirmation Retreat in the Diocese of St. Augustine.

A review of the basic tenets of the faith, as learned in the previous years of religious formation, would be helpful. There is no test that should be given to pass or not pass to receive the sacrament. Dialogue and interviews with the pastor, deacon, a qualified catechist or DRE would be the best way to discern readiness in conversation with the parents/legal guardians.

Name. The *Rite of Confirmation* and the Code of Canon Law (1983) reflect the intimate connection that exists within the sacraments of initiation. This should be stressed in the formation sessions. Several options exist for Confirmation names:

Candidates may choose the name of a saint or blessed whose qualities they admire or they may choose their baptismal name, either first or middle name.

Candidates should know the significance of the person's name whom they have chosen from our rich Catholic heritage.

Most importantly, candidates should be encouraged to learn about their patron and particularly to use that patron as a role model for the developing virtues they wish to emulate from that patron.

Resources for saint names:

<https://www.catholic.org/saints/>

<https://catholicsaints.info/>

<https://lifeteen.com/biggest-best-list-confirmation-saints-guys-girls/>

Liturgical Preparation

Confirmation Liturgy. Confirmation is conferred within the celebration of Mass. It may take place during the regularly scheduled Sunday liturgy. The Mass is concelebrated; the Bishop is Principal Celebrant. Holy Communion is to be distributed under both forms.

Prayers and Readings. The Presidential prayers come from The Roman Missal in the section "Ritual Masses." On Sundays of Advent, Lent and Easter as well as other feasts with the rank of Solemnity, the presidential prayers are from the proper of the day.

During the Octave of Easter, the presidential prayers are those for the particular day in the Octave.

The readings particular to the day, including the Psalm, MUST be used. If there are options given, consult with the Bishop as to which one (s) he would prefer. If in doubt, please consult the Ordo or call the Office of Christian Formation (904) 262- 3200, ext 118 for assistance.

Vesture. Red vestments are worn except on the Sundays of Advent, Lent, and Easter. On Solemnities and during the Octave of Easter, the color of the vestments appointed for the day are to be used.

Ministers Liturgical ministers including ushers/greeters, readers, Extraordinary Ministers of the Holy Communion, should be chosen from those who ordinarily perform these ministries. As recipients of the sacrament, candidates for Confirmation do not take on any ministerial roles. There should be a minimum of 5 altar servers for the ceremony. They should arrive at church at their normal reporting time to receive instructions. A cantor/leader of song should be present to assist the assembly with singing.

Sacristy. In addition to the sacred vessels and linens used in the liturgy, the following are needed:

- additional cups and purificators according to the number of Communion stations;
- A large bowl with water and a towel should be prepared on the credence table for the Bishop to wash his hands after Confirmation.

Preparation of Candidates. Candidates should be familiar with the Confirmation Liturgy. Candidates for Confirmation must be dressed either in a white Confirmation robe, (without a stole) supplied by the parish or in "**Sunday-best**" attire. In the later case, the following norms apply:

1. For Young Men:
 - Dress trousers (no jeans), with a shirt and tie. A coat is recommended, but not necessary.
2. For Young Women:

- A dress, or a skirt and blouse, or a pantsuit, none of which may be tight fitting.
- The dress or skirt must reach the knees (no mini-skirts) and it must cover the back
- The dress or blouse must have sleeves that cover the shoulders (spaghetti straps, etc are not sleeves)
- No low-cut tops on blouses or dresses.

For those that will be confirmed by Bishop Estévez, please note that he will be seated while confirming. Extra care needs to be taken with the attire of the young women and any female sponsors as they will be bending down to Bishop and will also be bending in front of the congregation.

Please ascertain prior to the ceremony that dress is appropriate.

If robes are worn, they must be white in color.

Stoles, a garment of the priestly clergy are never allowed to be worn by the candidates for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Photography. An announcement before the liturgy begins and printed in the worship aid should point out that photography is not appropriate during the liturgy. The Bishop attends receptions following Confirmation fully vested to afford the opportunity for photographs. One of the lead catechists or a member of the parish staff should organize the families for pictures. If possible, the order should be known ahead of time so that families can be ready when their turn comes.

The Celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation

Procession. Incense Bearer (optional)

Processional Cross

Processional Candles (2)

Non-ordained persons

(If celebration is at a Sunday Liturgy, the Book of the Gospels is carried by deacon, or by a reader if there is no deacon.)

Concelebrants

Master of Ceremonies

Bishop

Miter and Crosier Bearers

Presentation of Candidates. After the Gospel is proclaimed, the pastor or his delegate presents the candidates to the Bishop. Candidates should be seated and presented alphabetically. This may also be done by another minister or a catechist who has been involved in the preparation of the candidates. The following is suggested:

“Bishop N., the parish community of N. wishes to present to you its young men and women who have been prepared and are ready to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.”

For large groups of candidates, the pastor should present all candidates together.

Homily. Given by the Bishop.

Renewal of Baptismal Promises. Following the homily the Bishop asks the candidates to stand for the renewal of baptismal promises and questions them. The candidates respond loud and clear “I do” to each question. Please note, there is a slight variation in the wording of the Baptismal Promises in the revised Order for Confirmation. The Bishop accepts their profession of faith by proclaiming, *“This is our faith. This is the faith of the church. We are proud to profess it in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* All respond, *“Amen.”*

Imposition of Hands. For the laying on of hands, the Bishop invites all to pray. He then extends his hands over the candidates. Any priests who are conferring the Sacrament (anointing) along with the Bishop, also extend their hands with him as he prays.

Anointing.

- Candidates and sponsors go in procession to the Bishop who stands at the foot of the sanctuary. This should be done Communion line style with youth flowing one after the other. There should be no lull in the liturgical action. It is helpful if an experienced catechist directs the youth and their sponsors. Each candidate, with sponsor, approaches the Bishop.
- The sponsor places his/her right hand on the candidate’s shoulder. The sponsor in a **clear and loud** announces the candidate’s name. (the one being confirmed may also announce their own name) This is only one name, either their baptismal name or a chosen saints’ name. Nametags are helpful as many sponsors/candidates do not speak loud enough for Bishop to understand what they are saying.
- The Bishop anoints the forehead of each candidate saying, “N. be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.” The newly confirmed replies in a **loud and clear voice**, “Amen.”
- The Bishop then offers a sign of peace. The Bishop says: “Peace be with you.” The newly confirmed answers, loudly “And with your spirit.”
- Candidate and sponsor then return to their places and are seated.

Universal Prayer. The Bishop invites all to pray the General Intercessions. The deacon, if one is present, reads the intercessions. In the absence of a deacon, a reader announces them. An example is found in the Rite of Confirmation, No. 47.

Liturgy of the Eucharist.

- Some of the newly confirmed may bring forward the gifts of bread and wine.
- Communion is given under both kinds.

- Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion assist the Bishop and priests/deacons with the distribution of Communion.
- There should be two cups for each communion station.
- Post Communion and Dismissal. Announcements, invitation to join in reception or hospitality, may be made following the Prayer after Communion.

The Confirmation Liturgy – Guide for Preparing a Worship Aid.

Booklets. Booklets or programs may be provided to assist those gathered in their active participation of the liturgy. Hymns selected should focus on Holy Spirit, initiation, Church, faith, witness and discipleship and be well known to those participating in the liturgy. The Scripture readings and the liturgical season may also guide the selection of hymns.

A sample outline of a booklet:

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Entrance Hymn (words and music)

Glory to God (words and music) *Used only on Sundays, Solemnities, and Feasts except during Advent and Lent*

First Reading - *Cite reference only. Do not print text*

Responsorial Psalm *Print refrain and music*

Second Reading - *Cite reference only. Do not print text. Second reading only needed if called for in the liturgy for the day*

Gospel Acclamation (words and music) *If not sung, the Acclamation is omitted*

Gospel *Cite reference only. Do not print text*

RITE OF CONFIRMATION

Presentation of Candidates

Homily

Renewal of Baptismal Promises

Affirmation of Faith

Bishop: This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it in Christ Jesus our Lord.

All: Amen.

Laying on of Hands - Anointing with Chrism

Note: If music or song is used here it should be such that the Bishop and candidate can hear one another in the anointing and exchange of peace

Universal Prayer

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Hymn for Presentation and Preparation of Gifts (words and music)

Holy, Holy, Holy (words and music)
Memorial Acclamation (words and music)
Our Father - *If sung – words and music*
Communion Hymns (words and music)
Recessional Hymn (words and music)

Hymns/Songs that are reproduced in a program along with any prayers from the Roman Missal, the Rite of Confirmation or Lectionary for Mass MUST have the proper reprint permission and copyright notice of the publisher and/or copyright holder.

Sacramental Records. In addition to the recording of the sacrament at the parish where the sacrament occurred, the official record sheets of the Bishop are mailed annually with the schedule. These are to be returned to the Bishop's Office within two weeks of the celebration (11625 Old St. Augustine Road, Jacksonville, FL 32258). These sheets are bound into a book, so they cannot be folded. Other reminders: Black ink is used for all sacramental recording, entries needed to be printed, entries need to include the maiden name of the mother, and the top section must be completed on each sheet. Sacraments are recorded at the parish where they occurred only. So, for example, if two parishes combine for the celebration, only the parish where the sacrament occurred records the sacrament.

Notification of Confirmation is sent to each candidate's parish of Baptism.

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