

*Guidelines for Preparation for the
Sacrament of Confirmation*

Introduction

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BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF SAINT CLOUD, MINNESOTA

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FOREWARD

This document contains Confirmation preparation guidelines for use within the Diocese of Saint Cloud, Minnesota. These guidelines are accompanied by five supplemental booklets, each describing an element of the Confirmation preparation process complete with outlines and examples.

INTRODUCTION

Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole of the Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit, and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as children of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in the Church's mission...

~excerpted from CCC, 1213

Our lifelong journey of faith begins at Baptism with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Our invitation, to walk as a disciple of Christ, is accepted at Baptism by oneself or by one's parent(s)/guardian(s). The disciple, from the time of Baptism, continues to be formed in the Catholic faith and engaged within the family of faith. The journey that began at Baptism is nourished by participation in the Eucharist and strengthened through the Sacrament of Confirmation. The National Directory for Catechesis states:

Christian initiation is celebrated in Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. These sacraments are efficacious signs of God's love and stages of a person's journey toward communion with the Trinity. Through these sacraments, a person is incorporated in the Church's mission, and is welcomed to partake of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

~NDC, 36A

We continue to accept the life of discipleship through participation in the Sacramental life of the Body of Christ.

Brothers and sisters:

*As a body is one though it has many parts,
and all the parts of the body, though many,
are one body, so also Christ.*

*For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body,
whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons,
and we were all given to drink of one Spirit.*

Now the body is not a single part, but many.

You are Christ's body, and individually parts of it.

~1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 27

Guidelines for Preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation

CONFIRMATION PREPARATION: A Network of Relationships

The Confirmation preparation process in the Diocese of Saint Cloud seeks to foster and strengthen the faith of the candidates through the relationships of family, peers, sponsors, and faith community, knowing that it is through witness and relationship that they can come to know and love God.

The National Directory for Catechesis (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005) states the following.

“Dioceses and parishes should present catechesis for Christian initiation that:

- Summons the catechumen to profess faith in the person of Jesus Christ from the heart, to follow him faithfully, and to become his disciple.
- Recognizes that Christian initiation is an apprenticeship of the entire Christian life and so should include more than instruction.
- Presents a comprehensive and systematic formation in the faith so that the catechumen or candidate can enter deeply into the mystery of Christ.

- Incorporates the catechumen into the life of the Christian community, which confesses, celebrates, and bears courageous witness to the faith of Jesus Christ.
- Includes instruction on the rites of Christian initiation, their basic symbols and forms, and the offices and ministries at work in them.”

~NDC, pg. 118-119

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS FOR PREPARATION AND CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

Each of the five essential elements (reflective dialogue, sponsoring process, learning centers, retreat, liturgical celebrations) engage the candidate in new and already established relationships with others. Each element of the Confirmation preparation process aids in the strengthening of one or more of these significant relationships. In turn, the relationships help the candidate with a life of knowing and loving God within the Body of Christ.

ELEMENT ONE: REFLECTIVE DIALOGUE

Significant relationship – candidate with parent(s)/guardian(s) and the confirmation team member (i.e. confirmation coordinator, pastor, catechists, etc.)

The goals of these reflective dialogues and conversations are:

- to engage the candidate and his/her parent(s)/guardian(s) as they continue to live out the promises made at Baptism (Rite of Baptism Intro, para 5.5).
- to build upon the relationship that began at Baptism and exists within the parish community.
- to enable all involved to invest in the process of preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Reflective dialogue includes parish team members consisting of or a combination of: confirmation coordinator, pastor, DRE, youth minister, catechist, deacon, or other designated person.

1. **Initial Dialogue** – occurs with parish team member(s) and parent(s)/guardian(s) and candidate.

This entails an orientation to the process involved in the preparation of the sacrament. Items to be discussed may include: outlining the Confirmation process, choosing a sponsor, and talking about discipleship in the candidate's life.

2. **Reflective Conversation** – allows for the candidate's reflection on his/her experience and takes place with the parish team member. It may occur before and/or after the Sacrament of Confirmation is celebrated.

- Reflect on the preparation process, faith journey, intentions of continued discipleship, key learnings, and experiences.
- Post (Mystagogy) - Unpack the experience of the Sacrament and how to sustain his/her faith as a witness of Christ. Guide and direct the candidate to opportunities of ongoing faith formation.

ELEMENT TWO: LEARNING CENTERS

Significant relationship – candidate and parent(s)/guardian(s)

The goals of the learning centers are:

- to support parent(s)/guardian(s) in their role as primary faith educators of their children, focusing on the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- to assist the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the candidate through intentional faith-sharing experiences.
- to foster an informed and lived discipleship.

The learning centers include:

Individual modules of active learning experiences shared between the parent(s)/guardian(s) and candidate assisting them in a greater understanding of the elements of the Sacrament of Confirmation. The content of the learning centers is based on pg. 122-123 of the National Directory for Catechesis.

ELEMENT THREE: SPONSOR PROCESS

Significant relationship – candidate and sponsor

The goals of the sponsor process are:

- to focus on intentional formation on the Sacrament of Confirmation in a one-on-one setting with a Catholic faith witness.
- to build a relationship encouraging discipleship as a way of life, honoring and respecting the candidate's unique gifts and talents.
- to provide opportunities during individual faith-sharing conversations to

support the candidate in his/her life-long faith journey.

- to enhance the involvement of the Catholic Church community.

The sponsoring process includes:

A sponsor to the candidate who is a confirmed, practicing adult Catholic other than the candidate's parent (Canon 874 part 1.5). A sponsor orientation will be provided where each sponsor/candidate will receive a booklet to be completed in a timely manner on a one-to-one basis. The content of the booklet is based on pg. 122-123 of the National Directory for Catechesis.

ELEMENT FOUR: RETREAT

Significant relationship – candidate and peers

The goals of the retreat are:

- to foster the candidate's relationship with God within a community of peers.
- to provide a reflection time, drawing the candidate to a greater understanding of the connection between faith in God and their everyday life.
- to be encouraged to live as disciples of Jesus Christ through responsible participation in the life of the Church strengthened through the Sacrament of Confirmation.

The retreat may include:

Prayer, witness talks, faith sharing, celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (or reconciliation service), skits, games, reflection, and other activities; all with a focus on the Sacrament of Confirmation.

ELEMENT FIVE: LITURGICAL CELEBRATIONS/ RITUALS

Significant relationship – candidate and parish community

The goals of the Liturgical Celebrations are:

- to provide an opportunity for the parish community to identify and support the candidates who are entering the preparation process.
- to provide an opportunity for the parish assembly to examine their own commitment to living out Christian discipleship faithful to their baptismal promises (CCC, 1213).

- to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- to publicly recognize and affirm the newly confirmed within the parish community.

The Celebrations may include:

- Rite of Calling to Confirmation
- Rite of Sending to Confirmation
- The Sacrament of Confirmation
- Rite of Recognition of the Newly Confirmed

CONFIRMATION PREPARATION GUIDELINE CONSIDERATIONS

- The preparation process, as laid out in the guidelines, could be accomplished in a 6 -12 week timeframe and should be completed within a maximum of 6 months.
- Faith formation ought to be happening in addition to sacramental preparation. Ongoing formation is life-long. Confirmation preparation is NOT a faith formation process in itself; the purpose of Confirmation preparation as laid out in these guidelines is for the immediate preparation for reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- This preparation process trusts that candidates have been and will continue to be formed as disciples in Christ.
- Discipleship is manifested/exhibited through service and formation in various environments and communities including homes, schools, parishes, and sacramental lives - including weekly Mass attendance.
- The Bishop has requested that each parish celebrate Confirmation every year for the young people in their junior year of high school.
- The recommended age for a sponsor is 24 or older but not younger than 21 and is subject to the approval of the parish pastor. The confirmation sponsor would be someone who participates in the Eucharist regularly.
- The guidelines can accommodate cultural and special needs.

For more information, contact:

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