

## Diocese of Richmond

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1 October 2013

*Confirmation is the sacrament of the Church's mission, which brings the saving presence of God to the world.*

Dear Friends,

Nearly four years ago I shared with you the “Diocesan Policy and Guidelines for Preparation of Baptized Adolescents to Receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.” I want to offer my gratitude and congratulations for all your hard work in implementing these new policies.

Since coming to the Diocese of Richmond in 2004, I have visited all of the parishes. In the first few years, parishioners consistently expressed a desire to strengthen youth ministry. I have been pleased to see that great strides have been made diocesan-wide to offer more comprehensive youth ministry. Your diligence in following the guidelines offered in this booklet and your efforts to offer catechesis for grades 9-12 as a component of quality youth ministry, separate from preparation for Confirmation, is bearing great fruit in the lives of the young people.

With the advent of the third edition of the Roman Missal and the work that has been done on the other Sacraments of Christian Initiation, I give you this updated version of the guidelines for Confirmation preparation. My hope is that this revision would deepen your understanding of Confirmation in light of the Church's teaching and guide you as you prepare young people for Confirmation.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend Francis X. DiLorenzo  
Bishop of Richmond



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1 January 2010

*The Sacrament of Confirmation is a moment of initiation into the Church,  
for the purpose of mission to the world.*

Dear Friends,

It is with great joy that I share with you the “Diocesan Policy and Guidelines for Preparation of Baptized Adolescents to Receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.” The policies and guidelines in this document have come to fruition as a result of many years of prayerful reflection on the Sacrament of Confirmation by various ministers and volunteers across the diocese. I extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who participated in the development of these policies and guidelines, including those parishes that participated in the pilot year (2009 – 2010).

Since arriving in 2004, I have been able to visit many of the parishes in our diocese. The results of the “We Walk By Faith” surveys are clear: People continually point to youth ministry as an area of parish life that needs to be strengthened. My hope is that these revised policies and guidelines for Confirmation will be one step in the process of strengthening youth ministry programs across the diocese.

One of the key criteria behind the changes is for us to be faithful to what the Catholic Church asks with respect to sacramental preparation. You will notice that the new guidelines are simpler in some cases while being more explicit in others. As we continue to evaluate the Confirmation policies and guidelines over the next few years, I ask for you to be open to the movement of the Holy Spirit in this process, and to provide as much feedback as possible.

As the ordinary minister of the Sacrament of Confirmation, I approve the enclosed policies and guidelines, which will take effect on July 1, 2010, and will guide the 2010 – 2011 academic year.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Francis X. DiLorenzo  
Bishop of Richmond



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## **INTRODUCTION**

# **What is Confirmation?**



## Understanding Confirmation: The Sacrament of the Church's Mission

### **Pentecost: the Gift of the Holy Spirit**

“Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ And when he said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’” (John 20:21). This is the scene of Pentecost in the Gospel of John. (The more familiar account of Pentecost is found in the Acts of the Apostles [cf. 2:1–13].) The same encounter with the Lord, and the same gift of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of Christian witness, takes place in the Rite of Confirmation: “N., be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit. ...Peace be with you.”<sup>1</sup> Confirmation is the sacrament of the Church's mission, which brings the saving presence of Jesus Christ to the world.

### **The Holy Spirit: Breath of God and Giver of Life to the Church**

Among the many images of the Holy Spirit, perhaps the one that best helps us to understand the Spirit's role in Confirmation is the Breath of God.<sup>2</sup> God creates man by blowing “into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being” (Genesis 2:7). Thus, according to the Nicene Creed, the Holy Spirit is the “giver of life.” The Holy Spirit, the Breath of God, is also the “giver of life” to the Church:

What the soul is to the human body, the Holy Spirit is to the Body of Christ, which is the Church.<sup>3</sup>

As the “soul” of the Church, the Holy Spirit is the source of life and holiness for the Body of Christ.<sup>4</sup> Jesus blows this “breath of life” into the Church at Pentecost (cf. John 20:21). In this way, the Holy Spirit gives life to the Church.

### **A Sacrament of Mission to the World**

In a particular way, the Holy Spirit gives life to the Church by making present the saving action of the Paschal Mystery of Christ—his Death and Resurrection—in the sacraments.<sup>5</sup>

The Holy Spirit, a special outpouring of whom is given in Confirmation, enables the Body of Christ to be active in the world. The Holy Spirit gives the Church strength and stamina to continue the work of Christ. Catholics are anointed with the Holy Spirit in Confirmation so that they can be instruments of the “Anointed One” (i.e., the Christ) in the world.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Rite of Confirmation* in *The Rites*, vol. 1 (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1990), no. 44.

<sup>2</sup> See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1997), no. 703. (The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is also available online at the website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops [<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catechism/catechism-of-the-catholic-church/epub/index.cfm>]).

<sup>3</sup> St. Augustine, *Sermon 267*, quoted in *Catechism*, no. 797.

<sup>4</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 798.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 1091–1109, especially no. 1104.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 1285, 1294, 1303–1304, 1316.



Thus the Church's mission is not an addition to that of Christ and the Holy Spirit, but is its sacrament: in her whole being and in all her members, the Church is sent to announce, bear witness, make present, and spread the mystery of the communion of the Holy Trinity.<sup>7</sup>

The Holy Spirit is the source of the Church's inner renewal, as well as the impulse to her exterior mission. This is the meaning of the Church's mission inaugurated at Pentecost (cf. John 20:21; Acts 2:1–13).

**Thus, the Sacrament of Confirmation is a moment of *initiation* into the Church, for the purpose of the Church's *mission* to the world.**

By the Sacrament of Confirmation, [the baptized] are more perfectly bound to the Church and are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit. Hence they are, as true witnesses of Christ, more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed.<sup>8</sup>

Confirmation perfects Baptismal grace; it is the sacrament which gives the Holy Spirit in order to root us more deeply in the divine filiation, incorporate us more firmly into Christ, strengthen our bond with the Church, associate us more closely with her mission, and help us bear witness to the Christian faith in words accompanied by deeds.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 738; cf. no. 850.

<sup>8</sup> Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, no. 11, cited in *Catechism*, no. 1285.

<sup>9</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1316.



## Understanding Confirmation: The Unity of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that the Sacraments of Initiation are Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist.<sup>10</sup>

The *Rite of Confirmation* states that the sacrament of Confirmation completes Baptism.<sup>11</sup> The culmination of Christian initiation is the Eucharist, toward which Confirmation and all of the sacraments are directed.<sup>12</sup>

Christian initiation is accomplished by three sacraments together: Baptism which is the beginning of new life; Confirmation which is its strengthening; and the Eucharist which nourishes the disciple with Christ's Body and Blood for his transformation in Christ.<sup>13</sup>

Pope Benedict XVI emphasized that sacramental preparation must be structured so that the unity of the Sacraments of Initiation is kept intact.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, the order in which these sacraments are received should be arranged so that the Eucharist is seen as the goal of Christian initiation.<sup>15</sup>

It is therefore essential that Confirmation be understood as a strengthening of Baptism. Like Baptism, Confirmation is given only once, and places an "indelible" mark on one's soul.<sup>16</sup> As for the Eucharist, the ongoing reception of this sacrament by the Catholic faithful is critical to the mission of the Church.

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<sup>10</sup> *Catechism*, no. 1212 and 1285.

<sup>11</sup> *Rite of Confirmation*, no. 1.

<sup>12</sup> See *Catechism*, no. 1324.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 1275.

<sup>14</sup> *Sacramentum Caritatis*, no 17.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 18.

<sup>16</sup> *Code of Canon Law: Latin-English Edition*. New English Translation. (Washington, D.C.: Canon Law Society of America, 1999), canon 845§1.





## History of Confirmation<sup>17</sup>

The Church's understanding of Confirmation has been shaped by the history of how the sacrament was celebrated. Here, the driving force was the chronological separation of Confirmation from Baptism in the Latin or Western Church, and, consequently, the varying ages at which Confirmation was received.

This evolving practice engendered different views about the nature and purpose of the sacrament. The later Confirmation was received after Baptism, the greater the tendency to explain the sacrament outside of its original baptismal context. As a result, the initiatory aspect of Confirmation was understood more in terms of human maturity—coming of age—rather than the Church's mission.<sup>18</sup>

Originally, a person received all three Sacraments of Christian Initiation—Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist—in a single rite, with a bishop as the celebrant. This was the practice in the Latin Church up until the fifth or sixth century. However, when the bishop could no longer be present for all baptismal celebrations, he administered Confirmation separately, at a later time. (The Latin Church has retained the original practice of receiving the Sacraments of Christian Initiation together in the case of unbaptized adults who enter the Church through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults [RCIA].)

Through the centuries, the period of separation between Baptism and Confirmation grew longer. Still, the Church celebrated the Sacraments of Christian Initiation in the original order: Baptism in infancy, Confirmation at the age of discretion (seven), and First Holy Communion between the ages of 10 and 14.

The twentieth century brought about a change in the order of Christian initiation. Convinced that children could greatly benefit from receiving the Eucharist, Pope Saint Pius X lowered the age of First Holy Communion to seven.<sup>19</sup> Thus, after 1910, Confirmation came to be received after the Eucharist in many places.

Currently, both the *Rite of Confirmation*<sup>20</sup> and the *Code of Canon Law*<sup>21</sup> set the age of reason (seven) as the normal age for Confirmation. Significantly, the Church understands Confirmation to be “delayed” until this age (owing to the historical developments noted above). It is not that

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<sup>17</sup> This section is summarized in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 1290–1291.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Catechism of the Church*, no. 1308.

<sup>19</sup> Sacred Congregation of the Discipline of the Sacraments, Decree on First Communion, *Quam Singulari* (1910): (available at the Papal Encyclicals website (<http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius10/p10quam.htm>)).

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *Rite of Confirmation*, no. 11.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, canon 891.



the age of reason is absolutely necessary for the reception of the sacrament.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, in the case of emergency, even an infant should be confirmed.<sup>23</sup>

Effective July 2002, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops decreed the age for Confirmation to be between seven and 16. Within that range, each bishop may determine the age in his own diocese.<sup>24</sup>

Previously in the Diocese of Richmond, Bishop Walter F. Sullivan set the normative age for Confirmation at 16 years and eleventh grade. Effective July 2, 2012, Bishop Francis X. DiLorenzo set the appropriate age for preparation and reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation to be when an individual is both at least 15 years of age and enrolled in at least the tenth grade. As the ordinary minister of the sacrament, the bishop will continue to review the appropriate age for Confirmation.

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<sup>22</sup> “With regard to children, in the Latin Church the administration of confirmation is *delayed* until about the seventh year” (*Rite of Confirmation*, no. 11; emphasis added).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1314; *Code of Canon Law*, canon 891.

<sup>24</sup> Complementary Norm for the Bishops of the United States to Canon 891, (available at United States Conference of Catholic Bishops website (<http://www.usccb.org/norms/891.htm>)).



## Understanding Confirmation: Issues Regarding Preparation

Celebrating the Sacrament of Confirmation has always been a joyous occasion that highlights the richness of the Catholic tradition through the various signs and symbols used that are present in the rite. Over the years, the Church in the United States has established wide latitude concerning the most appropriate age for Confirmation, since this sacrament is typically celebrated apart from Baptism. This has led to various and conflicting views of the Sacrament of Confirmation.

As ministers and leaders in the Catholic Church, we should address misleading ideas that circulate about Confirmation among our youth and their parents. It is our role to understand the Sacrament of Confirmation within the proper context of the Church and share it with those with whom we work. In the following sections, we will explore a few misperceptions.

### **Issue #1: Confirmation as a claim of adulthood in the Church**

As Baptism and Confirmation grew further apart chronologically, a separate understanding of Confirmation developed to explain the shift. At times, this led to a misunderstanding of Confirmation as the “sacrament of Christian maturity”:

Although Confirmation is sometimes called the “sacrament of Christian maturity,” we must not confuse adult faith with the adult age of natural growth, nor forget that the baptismal grace is a grace of free, unmerited election and does not need “ratification” to become effective.<sup>25</sup>

Increasingly, and in many areas, Confirmation became a kind of “graduation” sacrament—something like a rite of passage in the Church for adolescents. Confirmation was seen as the moment when a young person made a definitive commitment to the faith that his or her parents had made at Baptism.

While the renewal of baptismal promises forms part of the Rite of Confirmation,<sup>26</sup> and while Confirmation does strengthen the grace of Baptism,<sup>27</sup> baptismal grace does not require any kind of affirmation in order to bear fruit.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1308.

<sup>26</sup> *Rite of Confirmation*, no. 23; cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1298.

<sup>27</sup> *Rite of Confirmation*, no. 1; cited in *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1285.

<sup>28</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1308.



Since Confirmation may be conferred as early as age seven—or, in the case of emergency, even in infancy—it is inaccurate to suggest that the reception of the sacrament constitutes adulthood in the Church. Rather, as we have seen, Confirmation forms part of Christian initiation, binding a person more closely to the Church so that he or she can participate fully in the Church’s mission to the world. Furthermore, Confirmation does not provide the singular affirmation of one’s Catholic identity; rather, it is one moment of affirmation among many others in the journey of faith, such as attending Mass and participating in the charitable work of the Church.

Since Confirmation has been misunderstood as the rite whereby a teenager would take ownership of his or her faith, many unnecessary expectations shaped the process of preparation. Numerous, even onerous, requirements were seen as measuring the level of the candidate’s commitment to the Church, especially to his or her own parish. While these goals were well intended, they tended to obscure the true meaning of the sacrament—namely, that it is an outpouring of the Holy Spirit that empowers a young person to share in the Church’s mission.

### **Issue #2: Confirmation as the culmination of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation**

Although Confirmation is normally the last Sacrament of Christian Initiation to be received in the United States, it nevertheless points to the Eucharist as the goal of the process. Participation in the Mass and the reception of Holy Communion complete Christian initiation and nourish us throughout our lives.<sup>29</sup>

The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life. The other sacraments ...are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, Confirmation is not the culmination of Christian Initiation. Instead, it, like all the other sacraments, points toward the Eucharist.

### **Issue #3: Confirmation as the only parish youth ministry program**

For many parishes, Confirmation preparation became the only form of youth ministry for high school students. For those who were confirmed at a younger age, there was no alternative for religious education or youth ministry. While catechetical leaders and youth ministers often witnessed great fruit from the experiences of young people who participated in Confirmation preparation, the retention rate after receiving Confirmation was quite low.

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<sup>29</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no 1322.

<sup>30</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no 1324.



Nevertheless, preparation for Confirmation apart from religious education raises the concern that teenagers will no longer attend religious education. The problem with this view is that it treats Confirmation as a “carrot” with which to lure teenagers into religious education, rather than as a free, unmerited gift of God to be received in faith.<sup>31</sup> A bedrock principle of the Church is this: *sacramentum propter homines* (“the sacraments are for the people”). Indeed, the Christian faithful have the right to receive the sacraments if they are properly prepared and disposed.<sup>32</sup>

The main problem with this view was that Confirmation seemed to exist not so much for the sake of the Church’s mission to the world, but rather for the sake of religious education and parish commitment. While all of this is understandable, the results were mixed.

To be sure, instruction in the Catholic faith (catechesis or religious education) and sacramental preparation are complimentary processes. Indeed, the Church requires that a candidate be adequately catechized in order to receive Confirmation and the other sacraments.<sup>33</sup> This is because the sacraments presume faith and also serve to strengthen faith.<sup>34</sup>

But while catechesis is a lifelong endeavor—it should lead to a coherent, overall view of the Catholic faith—sacramental preparation ought to focus on what is most pertinent to the sacrament being received.

### **Where to Go from Here**

Preparation for Confirmation should be separate and distinct from the high school level religious education and youth ministry. By distinguishing sacramental preparation from religious education, parishes will be able to unlock the true meaning of Confirmation. Then, their focus can properly shift to strengthening adolescent catechesis. In this regard, parishes should offer religious education for all four grade levels of high school, so that young people can grow in their knowledge of the faith.

While catechesis has a sacramental aspect, it cannot be based entirely on receiving the sacraments. Here, it is worth noting that many Protestant denominations—which have little or no sacramental preparation—successfully attract young people to religious education and youth ministry.

The shift in understanding the Sacrament of Confirmation will take time. Meanwhile, catechetical leaders and youth ministers must continue to find creative ways to evangelize young people.

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1301.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, canon 213.

<sup>33</sup> *Code of Canon Law*, canon 843 § 2.

<sup>34</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1123.



## Roles in Preparing for Confirmation

The following roles are key for ensuring that the Sacrament of Confirmation is received fruitfully:

### **Bishop**

The bishop is the ordinary minister of Confirmation. Accordingly, he sets the policy and guidelines for preparation, administration, and reception of the sacrament. In the Diocese of Richmond, the bishop traditionally confers the Sacrament of Confirmation during the Easter season, thereby highlighting the relationship between Confirmation and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The bishop may delegate authority to administer Confirmation, outside of the RCIA, to priests.

### **Pastor**

The pastor of the local parish has the responsibility to present to the bishop those persons who wish to be confirmed. He ensures that the candidates are prepared for the sacrament according to diocesan policy and the *Code of Canon Law*: “To receive Confirmation lawfully a person who has the use of reason must be suitably instructed, properly disposed and able to renew the baptismal promises.”<sup>35</sup> The pastor sees to it that the candidates have access to the other sacraments that will help them during their period of preparation, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation.

In the Latin Rite, the ordinary minister of Confirmation is the bishop. If the need arises, the bishop may grant the faculty of administering Confirmation to priests, although it is fitting that he confer it himself, mindful that the celebration of Confirmation has been temporally separated from Baptism for this reason. Bishops are the successors of the apostles. They have received the fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders. The administration of this sacrament by them demonstrates clearly that its effect is to unite those who receive it more closely to the Church, to her apostolic origins, and to her mission of bearing witness to Christ.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *Code of Canon Law*, canon 889 § 2.

<sup>36</sup> *Code of Canon Law*, canon 1313.



### **Catechetical Leaders and Catechists**

Catechetical leaders may include directors or ministers of religious education, youth ministers, and Confirmation coordinators. It is the role of catechetical leaders to ensure that there be adequate instruction for each candidate. By their work, catechetical leaders provide additional ways for candidates to be actively involved in the life of the Church outside of Confirmation preparation. These may include implementing a systematic, four-year curriculum for adolescent catechesis; implementing a comprehensive youth-ministry program for all grade levels; and involving candidates in existing ministry opportunities in the parish (e.g., social outreach, worship, education.)

Under the direction of catechetical leaders, catechists are tasked with the responsibility of handing on the Catholic faith to the candidates for Confirmation. Catechists open the Scriptures and the richness of the Church's tradition to the candidates during the preparation process.

### **Parish**

Sacraments are pivotal moments in the life of any parish. Because the local community has a responsibility to give witness of its faith to the candidates, the parish should be involved in the preparation and celebration of Confirmation. Pastors and catechetical leaders are responsible for presenting the candidates for Confirmation periodically to the parish community. (See "Rite of Recognition and Call to Confirmation.")

### **Confirmand**

The confirmand or candidate for Confirmation is an adolescent who has received Baptism and First Holy Communion, and who participates in the parish's Confirmation program. The confirmand must meet the diocesan guidelines pertaining to age and readiness. It is the responsibility of the candidate to be open to receiving the grace, responding to his or her Baptism. It is through careful study and prayer that a candidate should prepare to receive Confirmation.

### **Parents**

In his *Letter to Families*, Pope Blessed John Paul II wrote that "Parents are the first and most important educators of their own children, and they also possess a fundamental competence in this area; they are educators because they are parents."<sup>37</sup> Parents play a central role in preparing their sons and daughters for the sacrament by reinforcing the teachings of the Catholic Church in the home. The decision to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation rests with the candidate, but it should be made in consultation with his or her parents.

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<sup>37</sup> Pope Blessed John Paul II, *Letter to Families*; *Grattissimam Sane* (1994), no. 16 (available at [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/letters/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_let\\_02021994\\_families\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_02021994_families_en.html)).



## Sponsor

According to the *Code of Canon Law*, “As far as possible the person to be confirmed is to have a sponsor. The sponsor’s function is to take care that the person confirmed behaves as a true witness of Christ and faithfully fulfills the duties inherent in this sacrament.”<sup>38</sup>

The Diocese of Richmond requires that all sponsors be in compliance with the criteria set forth in canon law<sup>39</sup> and listed below. The requirements listed in canon 874 refer to Baptism, but also apply to Confirmation. If the pastor of the parish does not know the candidate’s sponsor, it is advisable that the pastor seek a letter from the sponsor’s parish attesting that he or she meets the Church’s requirements.

- Canon 874.1 To be admitted to undertake the office of sponsor, a person must:
1. Be appointed by the candidate for Baptism, or by the parents or whoever stands in their place, or failing these, by the parish priest or the minister; to be appointed the person must be suitable for this role and have the intention of fulfilling it;
  2. Be not less than sixteen years of age, unless a different age has been stipulated by the diocesan bishop, or unless the parish priest or the minister considers that there is a just reason for an exception to be made;
  3. Be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has received the blessed Eucharist, and who lives a life of faith which befits the role to be undertaken;
  4. Not labor under a canonical penalty, whether imposed or declared;
  5. Not be either the father or the mother of the person to be baptized.
- Canon 874.2 A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community may be admitted only in company with a Catholic sponsor, and then simply as a witness to the Baptism.
- Canon 893.2 It is desirable that the sponsor chosen be the one who undertook this role at Baptism.

**The sponsor need not be a member of the parish in which the candidate is preparing to receive, or will receive, the Sacrament of Confirmation.**

In the case of a sponsor who is unable to attend the celebration of Confirmation, a proxy may be appointed to serve in the role of sponsor. Those who serve as proxies must also fulfill the criteria set forth in canon 893.

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<sup>38</sup> *Code of Canon Law, canon 892.*

<sup>39</sup> *Code of Canon Law, canon 893.*





## Parish Principles for Preparing for Confirmation

Principles that should guide a parish in preparing young people to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation include the following:

- Emphasize what God is doing in our lives—*not what we do to be worthy or deserving of God.*
- Help discern the candidate's readiness based on his or her attitude, values, practice, and understanding of the sacraments, according to age and ability—*not on completion of a knowledge-based assessment or participation in parish youth-ministry programs.*
- Recognize that candidates learn in a variety of ways—*avoid a "one-size-fits-all" approach to instruction.*
- Work in partnership with families—*not in competition with family time and attention.*
- Point confirmands toward full participation and active discipleship—*Confirmation is a beginning, not an end.*
- Focus on preparing to receive the sacrament—*not on making a last-ditch effort to impart a complete adolescent catechesis.*



## Diocesan Policy Regarding Preparation and Reception of Confirmation

Effective July 1, 2010, the Diocese of Richmond has established the following normative policies regarding the Sacrament of Confirmation for adolescents who have received Baptism and the Eucharist. These policies are intended to be faithful to the teachings of the Catholic Church while being sensitive to the current state of parish-based youth ministry and religious education programs in the diocese.

The bishop of Richmond has directed the diocesan Office for Evangelization of Youth and Young Adults to ensure compliance with all policy and guidelines relating to the preparation for Confirmation by adolescents who have received the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist. The policy and guidelines concerning the liturgical celebration of the sacrament come under the diocesan Office of Worship.

### **Diocesan Policy Regarding Age for Confirmation**

In order for an adolescent who has received Baptism and the Eucharist to prepare for Confirmation, he or she must be currently enrolled in the at least the tenth grade and be at least 15 years of age. Reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation will occur in the spring of the year in which the candidate has completed the preparation.

#### **Canon 889**

No. 1: Every baptized person who is not confirmed, and only such a person, is capable of receiving Confirmation;

No. 2: Apart from the danger of death, to receive Confirmation lawfully a person who has the use of reason must be suitably instructed, properly disposed and able to renew the baptismal promises.

#### **Canon 890**

The faithful are bound to receive this sacrament at the proper time. Parents and pastors of souls, especially parish priests, are to see that the faithful are properly instructed to receive the sacrament and come to it at the opportune time.

#### **Canon 891**

The Sacrament of Confirmation is to be conferred on the faithful at about the age of discretion [*also known as the age of reason (age seven)*] unless the Episcopal Conference has decided on a different age, or there is danger of death or, in the judgment of the minister, a grave reason suggests otherwise.

#### **Complementary Norm for the Bishops of the United States to Canon 891**

Effective July 1, 2002, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, in accordance with the prescriptions of Canon 891, hereby decrees that the Sacrament of Confirmation in the Latin Rite shall be conferred between the age of discretion and about sixteen years of age, within the limits determined by the diocesan bishop and with regard for the legitimate exceptions given in Canon 891.



### **Diocesan Policy Regarding Proof of Baptism**

An adolescent seeking the Sacrament of Confirmation must present proof of his or her Baptism or Profession of Faith in the Catholic Church. If there are questions, the diocesan Tribunal should be consulted.

The parish of the one who receives Confirmation should record this sacrament in its register, noting the location, celebrant, and date of the sacrament; it should not be recorded in the register of the parish where the sacrament was celebrated (unless the confirmand resides in that parish).

#### **Canon 842**

A person who has not received Baptism cannot validly be admitted to the other sacraments.

### **Diocesan Policy for Preparation**

1. **Elements of the Preparation Program:** It is necessary that all pastors, catechetical leaders, youth ministers, and catechists follow the prescribed elements of the preparation program. Other requirements should not be invented, nor should mandatory elements be omitted. Examples of additional items that should not be required include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - a. Completion of service hours (e.g., 15 hours of community service)
  - b. Participation in an overnight retreat (a retreat is required, but not an overnight one)
  - c. Fulfillment of additional content as part of the preparation program not included in the Core Curriculum (e.g., Theology of the Body)
2. **Adolescent Catechesis:** Preparation for Confirmation **must** be separate and distinct from the parish's youth ministry or religious education program (catechesis). Four-year, systematic adolescent catechesis should be in place in every parish, based on the *Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age* approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (November 2007).
3. **Place of Instruction:** All instruction that pertains to preparation for Confirmation should take place through the candidate's home parish. Those enrolled in non parish-based religious education (i.e., home school or Catholic school) must prepare for the Sacrament of Confirmation in the program of their home parish.
4. **Collaboration with Local Parishes:** Given increased collaboration among local planning areas (LPAs), parishes are encouraged to work together to facilitate instruction, retreats, and other events related to preparation for Confirmation.



## Should the Practice of Choosing a “Confirmation Name” Be Encouraged?

Since Confirmation stands in relationship to Baptism, any discussion of a Confirmation name must be placed in that context. The current *Rite of Confirmation* recommends that the sponsor for Confirmation be the baptismal godparent.<sup>40</sup> It presumes that the candidate for Confirmation will be addressed by his or her baptismal name.<sup>41</sup> Nowhere does the rite mention the custom of choosing a separate Confirmation name; neither does the *Code of Canon Law*. Only in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* is there mention of a rite whereby a catechumen may receive a “baptismal name.”<sup>42</sup>

While the affirmation of one’s baptismal name is thus preferred, one could choose another saint’s name or a mystery of the Lord to be pronounced by the bishop in addition to—not in place of—one’s baptismal name (e.g., “John *Sebastian* Smith” or “Jane *of the Incarnation* Smith”). There is no restriction as to the sex (male or female) of the saint, just as in many cultures baptismal names may be combined (e.g., “Peter Mary” or “Ann Daniel”).

The custom of choosing a patron saint or taking an additional name for the Rite of Confirmation should be accompanied by catechesis regarding the communion of saints. The candidate should demonstrate knowledge of the saint or mystery of the Lord that he or she has chosen. It should be emphasized that if a name is chosen, it is to honor a saint or mystery of the Lord, rather than to honor a loved one.

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<sup>40</sup> *Rite of Confirmation*, no. 5.

<sup>41</sup> *Rite of Confirmation* nos. 21, 27.

<sup>42</sup> See “Rite of Choosing a Baptismal Name,” *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, no. 202.





## PHASE I: Inquiry



### Inquiry

Opportunities to discern openness to reception of the Sacrament and articulate expectations

- Candidate / Parent Discernment Orientation Session
- Intake Interview with Candidates and Parents completed by Pastor or designee
- Rite of Recognition and Call to Confirmation (optional)





## Overview of the Inquiry Phase

### **Orientation and Discernment**

Candidates and parents attend an orientation session to discern readiness and disposition for sacramental preparation. (See “Parent/Candidate Orientation and Discernment Session,” pages 23–25.)

### **Entrance Interview**

The pastor or his delegate(s) conduct separate interviews of the candidate and his or her parents. (See “Interview Questionnaire for Confirmation Preparation,” pages 26–29.)

The pastor’s invitation for the young person to enter the program is based on the interviewer’s assessment of the candidate’s:

- Participation in the sacramental life of the Church, especially regular attendance at Sunday Mass and reception of Holy Communion.
- Basic formation in the Gospel as evidenced through knowledge of the Catholic faith and a desire for ongoing conversion.

If the invitation to begin preparation for Confirmation is delayed, a follow-up plan should be discussed with the candidate and his or her parents. (See “Follow-up Plan for Delaying Confirmation,” page 30.)

### **Rite of Recognition and Call to Confirmation**

The celebration of the Rite of Recognition is encouraged but optional. (See “Rite of Recognition and Call to Confirmation,” pages 32–34.)





## Parent/Candidate Orientation and Discernment Session

### Orientation Session Components

#### Icebreaker (optional)

- Have parents and young people sit in groups of 8–10.
- Ask parents to share their experience of Confirmation with their group.
  - What was the process like?
  - When did you receive the sacrament?
  - Who was your sponsor?
  - What do you expect from the Confirmation process for your son or daughter?
- (Another option is to have parents share answers only with their own son or daughter.)

#### Beginning Activity: Time Management

- Have the parents and teens sit together.
- Ask them to spend a few minutes brainstorming all of the things that occupy their time during the week.
- After they have compiled the list, ask them to discuss (as a family group or with another family) the following questions:
  - Where is God present during my week?
  - What items on my list are “must-haves” and why?
  - How will the Confirmation process affect the weekly list?

#### What is Confirmation?

- Give a brief history of the sacrament.
- Share when the sacrament is given in the Diocese of Richmond (tenth grade).
- Address the connection to Baptism and the Eucharist.
- Go over expectations and responsibilities of receiving a sacrament.
  - (Explain this point in terms of the diocesan categories of Word, Worship, Community, and Service.)

### Description of the Confirmation-Preparation Process for Teens

- Interview with Pastor / Delegate(s)
  - Part of receiving a sacrament is to explore its meaning and to respond to the grace that is given.
  - The first part of this exploration will be a conversation with the pastor or his delegate(s). This will allow those who are responsible for the immediate preparation for the Confirmation to get to know each of you better.





- Rite of Recognition and the Call to Confirmation (optional)
  - The purpose of this liturgical ceremony is to enable the parish to pray for the candidates and for the candidates to express their desire to receive the sacrament.
  
- Immediate-Preparation Sessions
  - The expectation is that candidates will attend all sessions.
  - If candidates miss a session, can they attend at another parish?
  - Explain the sessions and the time frame (12 hours divided into...)
  
- Continuing Formation
  - Explain that the expectation for all sacraments is that we continue to learn and grow in faith.
  - Here at .... we provide these opportunities for continued formation.
  
- Parental Involvement
  - Parents will be asked to...
  
- Sponsor Involvement
  - Canon 892: As far as possible the person to be confirmed is to have a sponsor. The sponsor's function is to take care that the person confirmed behaves as a true witness of Christ and faithfully fulfills the duties inherent in this sacrament.
  
  - Canon 893: A person who would undertake the office of sponsor must fulfill the conditions mentioned in canon 874, which reads:
    - To be admitted to undertake the office of sponsor, a person must: be appointed by the candidate for Baptism, or by the parents or whoever stands in their place, or failing these, by the parish priest or the minister; to be appointed the person must be suitable for this role and have the intention of fulfilling it;
  
    - Be not less than sixteen years of age, unless a different age has been stipulated by the diocesan bishop, or unless the parish priest or the minister considers that there is a just reason for an exception to be made;
  
    - Be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has received the blessed Eucharist, and who lives a life of faith which befits the role to be undertaken;
  
    - Not labor under a canonical penalty, whether imposed or declared;
  
    - Not be either the father or the mother of the person to be baptized.







- A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community may be admitted only in company with a Catholic sponsor, and then simply as a witness to the Baptism.
- It is desirable that the sponsor chosen be the one who undertook this role at Baptism.
- Retreat
- Regular participation in the sacramental life of the Church
  - Attending Mass every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation, and receiving the Sacrament of Penance regularly.

### **Continuation of the Lifelong Process of Learning and Deepening of our Faith**

- Regular participation in the sacramental life of the Church.
- Faith formation (i.e., adolescent catechesis, youth ministry).
- Prayer.
- Participation in the mission of the Church through Word, Worship, Community, and Service in the parish and/or in the wider community.

### **Discernment Components**

#### **Discerning Commitment to the Process**

- Prayer.
- Scripture (choose an appropriate Scripture passage(s) regarding commitment to the process).
- Reflection.
  - Review time commitments listed at beginning.
  - Review the Confirmation preparation process (retreat, contact hours, etc.).
  - Realistically consider the amount of time that is required: Can you commit to the preparation process?
  - How will Confirmation preparation affect your other activities?
- Express commitment or non-commitment to Confirmation preparation.





## Interview Questionnaire for Confirmation Preparation

The following questionnaire is meant to facilitate a conversation between the pastor or his delegate(s), the young person, and the parents who have attended the orientation session. The purpose of the interview is to determine whether the candidate should begin preparing for Confirmation.

Since the Church only requires that a candidate ask for, and be properly disposed, to receive a sacrament,<sup>43</sup> the benefit of the doubt must always be given to the candidate. It is then the Church's responsibility to prepare those who have requested the sacrament.<sup>44</sup> It is not the other way around, whereby a candidate must "prove" his or her worthiness to receive the sacrament.

Therefore, unless and until the candidate expresses his or her unwillingness, or inability, to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, the preparation should continue. Otherwise the sacrament should be delayed.

The interview should not be considered an examination, in which a particular response automatically excludes a candidate from preparing for Confirmation. Rather, the conversation is meant to give the interviewer a general sense of the candidate's disposition. In this regard, there are some responses, or combination of responses, that might suggest postponing Confirmation. These could include the following: not believing in God; ignorance of basic knowledge about Jesus Christ (his humanity and divinity, his saving mission); lack of interest in getting to know the person of Christ better; infrequent attendance at Sunday Mass; considerable ignorance about the Eucharist; an expressed unwillingness to grow in holiness; being too busy to prepare for Confirmation; a lack of desire to participate in the Church; and / or little interest in prayer.

Suggested topics for the interview are listed below. Not all of the points need to be covered. For each topic, both objective and subjective questions are given. A conversation of 10–15 minutes is normally sufficient to determine whether the candidate should begin preparation for Confirmation.

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<sup>43</sup> See *Code of Canon Law*, canon 843 § 1

<sup>44</sup> *Code of Canon Law*, canon 843 § 2





## **Suggested Questions for Confirmation Candidates**

### **God is a Trinity of Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit**

- When we make the Sign of the Cross, we say “In the *name* [singular] of the Father, and of the Son, of the Holy Spirit.”
  - Does this mean that we believe in one God or in three?
  - How are the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit God?
- Do you believe in God? Why?
- How would you describe or explain God to a friend?
- What has been the most powerful or memorable experience of God in your life?

### **The Son of God: Jesus Christ**

- What does it mean that Jesus is the Savior of the world?
  - How does this make Jesus different from someone like Buddha?
- What is the meaning of Jesus’ Death and Resurrection?
- Is Jesus God? Is he human?
- Jesus Christ became human so that God would be close to us.
  - Would you like to get to know the person of Christ better?
- What is your favorite story about Jesus?
  - What has this taught you about Jesus?
- Where do you see Jesus in your life?

### **The Holy Spirit**

- The Creed we recite on Sunday mentions the Holy Spirit.
  - What do we say about the Holy Spirit?
- Describe an episode in the Bible that features the Holy Spirit.
- Describe a situation in your life when you felt the presence of the Holy Spirit.
- Jesus sent the Holy Spirit upon the disciples at Pentecost.<sup>45</sup> They went from being afraid to proclaiming Christ and forgiving sins in his name.
  - In light of this, what is the role of the Holy Spirit in the Church?
- The Sacrament of Confirmation focuses on the Holy Spirit.
  - What do you think is the connection between Confirmation and the Holy Spirit?
- How do you perceive the presence of the Holy Spirit in your parish?

### **The Church**

- What is the difference between worshipping God in a church on Sunday as part of a community (Mass), rather than just praying on your own at home?
- What role does the Church play in your life right now?
- How might the Church shape your future decisions such as where you go to college or what career you pursue?

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<sup>45</sup> See John 20:21–22; Acts 2:1–13.





### The Sacraments

- Name as many of the seven sacraments as you can.
- What are some of the physical signs and symbols used in the sacraments?
- Why was your Baptism important, even if you don't remember it?
- What do you remember about your First Holy Communion?
- Were you prepared for the Sacrament of Penance (Confession or Reconciliation)?
- How do you understand Confirmation?
- Would you like to be confirmed?
- What do you hope that Confirmation will do for you?

### The Eucharist

- Why is it obligatory for Catholics to attend Mass on Sunday?
- Do you attend Mass on Sunday?
  - What do you get out of it?
- What is the purpose of Mass?
  - What are some of its effects?
- What does it mean to say that the Eucharist is the Body and Blood of Christ?
- How does receiving Holy Communion on Sunday affect how you live during the rest of the week?

### Discipleship

- Who is called to be holy, to be a saint?
- Each year, on November 1, the Church celebrates All Saints Day.
  - Why does the Church have such a celebration?
- What characterizes the life of a follower (disciple) of Jesus Christ?
- Would you like to become a better disciple of Christ?
- Do you have the time to work on becoming a better disciple, and to prepare to for Confirmation?
- Why does the Catholic Church emphasize the importance of the Blessed Virgin Mary?
- Is it true that Catholics “worship” Mary, and that we pray to statues of saints?
- When receiving Confirmation, a person can take a saint's name for this occasion.
  - What is the purpose of this custom?
- Who is a saint that you admire, and why?

### Prayer

- Why is it important to pray?
- What does the Our Father (Lord's Prayer) teach us about prayer?
- What is your favorite way of praying?
- What effect does prayer have in your life?
- What would you like to learn about prayer?
- How has your prayer changed since your first learned to pray?





**Suggested Questions for Parents**

- Why do you desire your child to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation?
- What do you do in your home to encourage prayer and formation in the Catholic faith?
- Do you attend Mass regularly on Sunday with your family?
- How are you and your family involved in the parish?
- In what ways do you continue to learn about your faith?
- Do you understand the expectations for your son or daughter regarding preparation for Confirmation? Are you willing to support your child in this process?





## Follow-up Plan for Delaying Confirmation

In some cases it becomes clear that a candidate is not ready to be confirmed. Certain behaviors or circumstances—such as the candidate’s making clear statements about not believing in God—indicate that he or she is indisposed toward the sacrament. Other “red flags” may include the candidate’s feeling coerced by his or parents, absenteeism, lack of willingness to learn and participate, immaturity, and/or a lack of participation in the sacramental life of the Church. In these situations, the pastor or his delegate, together with the candidate and his or her parents, may decide to delay Confirmation.

This decision must be made with the utmost sensitivity and must be accompanied by the offer of pastoral care and an invitation to return when the candidate is ready. In the meantime, the parish should provide the candidate and his or her parents with opportunities to become more disposed to receive Confirmation. The list below contains some possibilities:

- Provide families with helpful resources for learning more about the faith and practicing the faith more fully.
- Expose the candidate to good adult mentors.
- Catechize the candidate and parents on the meaning of Confirmation, including its basis in Scripture, its historical development, and its liturgical celebration.
- Remove as many obstacles as possible to the reception of Confirmation. Seek to balance the values of adequate preparation and proper disposition with the recognition that sacraments are free gifts from God.
- Encourage the candidate and parents to become more involved in the sacramental life of the Church.
- Encourage the candidate and parents to become involved in the parish community.
- Maintain contact with the candidate to foster continued formation in the faith, and to encourage reception of the sacrament as soon as the candidate is ready.
- The pastor or his delegate should follow up with the candidate and his or her parents within a reasonable period of time.





## Pastoral Notes for Celebrating Confirmation with Persons with Disabilities

Catholics with disabilities have a right to participate in the sacraments as full members of the Church.<sup>46</sup> Ministers must not refuse the sacraments to those who ask for them at appropriate times, who are properly disposed, and who are not prohibited by law from receiving them.<sup>47</sup>

For celebrating the Sacrament of Confirmation with those who have disabilities, consult “Celebrating the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities” found on the website of the diocesan Office of Persons with Disabilities<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> See *Code of Canon Law*, canon 213.

<sup>47</sup> See *Code of Canon Law*, canon 843§1.

<sup>48</sup> The document is available on the website of the diocesan Office of Persons with Disabilities ([http://www.richmonddiocese.org/worship/docs/Guidelines\\_Sacraments\\_Persons\\_Disabilities.pdf](http://www.richmonddiocese.org/worship/docs/Guidelines_Sacraments_Persons_Disabilities.pdf)).





## Rite of Recognition and Call to Confirmation

*(After the homily)*

### Presentation of the Candidates

#### **Catechetical Leader:**

We welcome \_\_\_ (#) adolescent members of our parish who are candidates for Confirmation. These young people are preparing to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation during the season of Easter. Guided by the Spirit of God, nourished by the Scriptures and the teaching of the Church, and supported by the example and prayers of this community, they hope to strengthen the grace of Baptism. They come before us today, asking that we recognize the call of God in their lives and that we pray for them.

Candidates, you were named by your parents at Baptism. Today this community calls you by name and invites you to reaffirm that Baptism. Candidates, may your journey continue from where your life in Christ began, at the baptismal font. When your name is called, please come forward to renew the promises of your Baptism.

*The candidates are then called by name.*

#### **Celebrant:**

My dear candidates, I ask you:

Are you willing to listen to the Word of God and put it into action?

*The candidates respond: I am.*

#### **Celebrant:**

Are you willing to reflect on the life and mission of the Church, and on your own role within the Church?

*The candidates respond: I am.*

#### **Celebrant:**

Members of \_\_\_\_\_, we have heard these candidates express their desire to listen to the Word of God and to reflect on their role in the Church. I now ask you: Are you ready to support them by your prayer and example?

*The assembly responds: I am.*







## Candidates' Renewal of Baptismal Promises

### **Celebrant:**

My dear candidates, on the day of your Baptism, your parents professed the Church's faith on your behalf.

Confirmation will strengthen the grace of the Holy Spirit that was given to you on that day. So I now ask you to renew your baptismal promises. When you have finished, the community will respond by saying "Amen."

Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth?

*The candidates respond:* **I do.**

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, died, and was buried, rose from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father?

*The candidates respond:* **I do.**

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?

*The candidates respond:* **I do.**

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

*The assembly responds:* **Amen.**





### **Prayer of the Faithful**

*The Prayer of the Faithful follows, either in the usual form at Mass or in the form provided here. The celebrant concludes the Prayer of the Faithful with the prayer of blessing. From the following petitions those best suited to the occasion may be used or adapted, or other intentions that apply to the particular circumstances may be composed.*

*The celebrant says:*

The Holy Spirit guides us into all truth. With confidence in the promise of our Lord Jesus Christ, let us ask the Father to hear our prayers and to bless these young people as they prepare to receive a new outpouring of the Spirit in Confirmation.

*Assisting minister:*

For the Church, that she may strive to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all peoples, let us pray to the Lord.

For families, that they may unite their joys and struggles to the Death and Resurrection of Christ in this Eucharistic Sacrifice, let us pray to the Lord.

For the young people preparing to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, that they may be open to the grace of the Holy Spirit, let us pray to the Lord.

For all who have received the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, that they may give glory to God by leading holy lives, let us pray to the Lord.

### **Blessing of Candidates**

#### **Celebrant:**

*With hands extended over the candidates for Confirmation, the celebrant says immediately:*


Gracious and loving Father,  
we give you thanks and praise  
for these candidates,  
whom you have called by name.  
Continue to guide them on their journey of faith.  
Bless them with wisdom to see clearly the path of your Son,  
who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.  
Bless them with reverence,  
so that they may receive the Sacrament of Confirmation worthily.  
Bless them with courage to fulfill your will.  
Bless them with wonder and awe,  
so that they may be open to the fullness of your Holy Spirit.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

*(The candidates then return to their seats.)*





## PHASE II: Core Program

 Core Program	
<p><u>Concurrent Requirements:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Concurrent enrollment in religious education program for grade 10</li><li>• Selection of Confirmation sponsor in accord with Canon #892 and 893</li><li>• Retreat</li><li>• Assessment of readiness to receive the sacrament by Pastor or designee</li></ul>	<p><u>Catechesis:</u></p> <p>4 catechetical modules covering the fundamental theological elements of Confirmation (12 hours)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Module 1: God's Mission to Us   <i>The Father Sends the Son and the Holy Spirit</i></li><li>• Module 2: The Church   <i>God's Mission Continued...</i></li><li>• Module 3: Confirmation   <i>The Initiation into the Mission</i></li><li>• Module 4: Mission of Discipleship   <i>A Life of Witness</i></li></ul>





## Overview of Core Program

Preparation for Confirmation should seek to lead the candidate to a more intimate union with Christ and to a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit, so that he or she can capably assume the responsibilities of the sacrament. To this end, instruction 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. The latter bears special responsibility for preparing the candidate.<sup>49</sup>

### Concurrent Enrollment in Religious Education

All candidates seeking Confirmation must be concurrently enrolled in a religious-education program during the year in which they prepare for the sacrament. Enrollment in a religious education is defined as one of the following:

- a. Participation in a systematic, parish-based religious-education program
- b. Enrollment in a diocesan or private Catholic school
- c. Participation in a home-school-based Catholic religious-education program (approved by pastor)

There is no requirement that a candidate have been enrolled in formal religious education before beginning preparation for Confirmation.

### Retreat

All candidates must participate in a retreat as part of their preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation. The Diocese of Richmond requires that each parish provide the opportunity for such an experience, which should prayerfully reflect on Confirmation. It is recommended that the retreat last between four hours and two days. If a candidate cannot participate in a parish-based retreat due to extenuating circumstances, it is recommended that the catechetical leader or youth minister make appropriate accommodations. Parishes are encouraged to work with other parishes in their local planning areas and/or use diocesan Confirmation retreats. It is discouraged for Confirmation candidates to participate in other retreats that are not geared toward the sacrament (e.g. Discovery, Christian Awakening, Encuentro, Kujenga, “The Rez,” Antioch, etc.) While these retreats provide excellent opportunities for faith development, they may not focus adequately on Confirmation.

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<sup>49</sup> *Catechism*, no. 1309.





## Catechetical Component

(See Modules I through IV, pages 38–56.)

Each parish is responsible for creating a Confirmation preparation program that follows the diocesan curriculum and is separate and distinct from the four-year systematic adolescent catechetical curriculum. The instruction must cover all objectives included in the diocesan curriculum—no more and no less. It is expected that the Confirmation catechetical program will not last more than six months and will not exceed 15 hours.

The instruction for Confirmation has been organized into four miniature courses or modules. These explore the sacrament within the entirety of the Catholic faith and focus on the role of the Holy Spirit—in salvation history, in the sacraments and mission of the Church, and in the lives of those who are confirmed. It is important to note that there is a coherence to these modules, as each one builds on the others. The order of the modules follows the structure of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: faith, sacraments, morals, and prayer.

A parish may choose a textbook for Confirmation preparation (in accordance with the conformity list of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops<sup>50</sup>), and may organize the instructional sessions accordingly. Please note that a textbook is **not** required.

Nevertheless, given the internal logic and flow of the diocesan Confirmation curriculum, it is imperative that the parish use a given textbook within the context of the modules. Otherwise it will be harder for the candidates to grasp the meaning and purpose of the sacrament.

### Assessment of Readiness by the Pastor

It is the pastor's role to assess the readiness of the candidate to receive Confirmation. The pastor may choose whatever method he deems appropriate for doing so.

Before being confirmed, the candidates should be encouraged to participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

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. More intense prayer should prepare one to receive the strength and graces of the Holy Spirit with docility and readiness to act.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> *Conformity List of Catechetical Texts and Series*, available at <http://www.usccb.org/about/evangelization-and-catechesis/subcommittee-on-catechism/upload/Current-Conformity-List.pdf>

<sup>51</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1310.





## MODULE I

### God's Mission to Us: The Father Sends the Son and the Holy Spirit

#### Purpose and Objective

The mission we receive—the primary meaning of Confirmation—is a response to what God has done for us. In this module, candidates will explore the history of salvation (God's mission to us) as presented in the Creed. The focus is on the Holy Spirit, since it is the Spirit's gifts that are bestowed in Confirmation. This emphasis will prepare the candidates to respond to God's action in the Sacrament of Confirmation.

#### References

Relevant and helpful biblical citations, along with references to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), are provided. The structure of the module largely follows the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed (recited at Sunday Mass), and the presentation of the Holy Spirit found in the *Catechism* (Part One, Chapter Three: "I Believe in the Holy Spirit," nos. 683–732).

#### Confirmation is the sacrament of the Church's mission, which brings the saving presence of God to the world.

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1. "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' And when he said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'" (John 20:21).
2. The same encounter with the Lord, and the same gift of the Holy Spirit, takes place in the Rite of Confirmation: "N., Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit....Peace be with you."<sup>52</sup>

#### The Church's mission, and our mission within the Church, is a response to God's mission to us.

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1. God's mission to us is his loving plan of salvation:
  - a. All people are meant to share in the divine life and love (CCC 265).
  - b. The history of God's mission to us, and our response, is the story of salvation.
2. The story of salvation is the history of God's showing us who he is.
  - a. In other words, God reveals who he is by saving us (CCC 234).
  - b. This is concretely expressed in the Sign of the Cross: The Paschal Mystery of Christ—his Death, Resurrection, and gift of the Holy Spirit, all of which saves us—reveals God as a Trinity of Persons.
    - i. We make trace the Cross (the gesture) as we invoke God (the words).
    - ii. The Sign of the Cross summarizes what is found in Scripture:
      1. "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46).
      2. "And bowing his head, he handed over the spirit" (John 19:30).

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<sup>52</sup> Rite of Confirmation, no. 44.





### **The Creed is a compact summary of God's mission to us.**

1. The Sign of the Cross is a miniature version of the Creed, which offers a “tour” of the history of salvation.
2. The structure of the Creed (recited at Sunday Mass) reflects the nature and work of the Trinity. (The Creed tells us who God is, and how he has revealed himself by saving us.)
3. The three paragraphs of the Creed correspond to the three Persons of the Trinity: Father (first), Son (second), and Holy Spirit (third).

### **The summary of salvation found in the Creed is the story of the joint mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit.**

1. Salvation is the common work of the three Persons of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (CCC 258).
2. God the Father engages the world through the action of the Son and the Holy Spirit (CCC 292). “When the Father sends his Word [the Son], he always sends his Breath [the Holy Spirit]. In their joint mission, the Son and the Holy Spirit are distinct but inseparable” (CCC 689).
3. Whereas the Son eventually becomes visible in the history of salvation, it is the Spirit who reveals him (CCC 689).
4. While remaining invisible, the Holy Spirit nevertheless manifests himself through various symbols at the key moments in salvation history. These include wind, the Breath of God, anointing, the cloud, the dove, and fire (CCC 691, 694–701).
5. Creation *Symbols: Wind, Breath of God*

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life...

- a. “In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless wasteland, and darkness covered the abyss, while a mighty *wind* [the same word as *spirit*] swept over the waters” (Genesis 1:1).
- b. “The LORD God formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being” (Genesis 2:7) (CCC 704).



6. ProphetsSymbol: Anointing

Who has spoken through the Prophets.

- a. After humanity's fall from grace through sin (Genesis 3), God promises to send his Anointed (Chosen) One, known as the "Messiah" (in Hebrew) or "Christ" (in Greek) (Genesis 3:15b) (CCC 695).
- b. The various expressions of God's promises (covenant) are found throughout the Old Testament. The Holy Spirit inspires the authors of the Old Testament books, who are the "prophets" mentioned in the Creed (CCC 702).
  - i. Covenant with Noah after the flood (Genesis 9).
  - ii. Covenant with Abraham and his descendants (Genesis 15, 17) (CCC 705–706).
  - iii. Law: covenant with Moses (Exodus 20) (CCC 707–708).
  - iv. Prophets of Israel, especially the expectation of the Messiah announced by Isaiah (CCC 709–712).
  - v. John the Baptist (Luke 1:15, 41; 3:3–19) (CCC 717–720).
- c. "The symbolism of anointing with oil also signifies the Holy Spirit, to the point of becoming a synonym for the Holy Spirit....There were several anointed ones of the Lord in the Old Covenant, pre-eminently King David" (CCC 695). (See Exodus 30:22–32 and I Samuel 16:13)

7. IncarnationSymbols: Cloud, Dove

By the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.

- a. The climax of God's work—the joint mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit—is the Son's becoming human, in order to die and be raised (CCC 727). This event is known as the *Incarnation* (which means "to take flesh").
- b. "In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, he spoke to us through a son..." (Hebrews 1:1).
- c. The Son of God becomes human when the Holy Spirit conceives him in the womb of the Virgin Mary.
  - i. "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).
  - ii. The Incarnation reveals Jesus as the Messiah or Christ: the "Anointed" or "Chosen One" (Matthew 1:1, 17–18; 2:4; Luke 1:32; 2:11)
  - iii. The Son is the eternal "Chosen One" of God; in time, the Father sends him, accompanied by the Holy Spirit, into the world. "Jesus is God's Anointed in a unique way: the humanity the Son assumed was entirely anointed by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit established him as 'Christ'" (CCC 695). Thus, the Father anoints Jesus as Christ by the Holy Spirit.







- iv. The Baptism and Transfiguration of Jesus—during which the Holy Spirit appears as dove and cloud respectively—symbolically express his anointing: “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (e.g., Matthew 3:13–17; 17:1–5).
- v. The Holy Spirit is Jesus’ anointing: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me” (Luke 4:18) (CCC 690).
- vi. Jesus never ceases being divine; however, as a human being, he relies on the power of the Holy Spirit given to him by the Father to accomplish his saving mission (CCC 695).
- vii. “Though he was in the form of God, [Jesus] did not regard equality with God... Rather, he emptied himself” (Philippians 2:6–7).

## 8. Paschal Mystery

*Symbols: Anointing, Breath of God, Wind, Fire*

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,  
 he suffered death and was buried,  
 and rose again on the third day  
 in accordance with the Scriptures.  
 He ascended into heaven  
 and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

- a. The Paschal (Easter) Mystery of Christ, made possible by the Incarnation, is the definitive event of salvation (CCC 601–605, 609, 613–617, 654).
- b. Jesus died on the Cross for the forgiveness of sins. The Spirit who conceived him in the womb also raised him from the dead: “If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also, through his Spirit that dwells in you” (Romans 8:11; cf. 1 Peter 3:18) (CCC 689).
- c. The culmination of the Paschal Mystery is the Father’s sending the Holy Spirit, in name of the Son, upon the Apostles at Pentecost (John 20:19–23; Acts 2:1–13) (CCC 731). Now the work of Christ continues in the Church, through the power of the same Holy Spirit...





## MODULE II

### The Church: God's Mission Continues...

#### Purpose and Objective

The saving work of the Son of God and the Holy Spirit forms the Church at Pentecost. The Church becomes the gathering of all people into the Body of Jesus Christ, by the working of the Holy Spirit. Through the sacraments, we come to belong to the Church and are continually guided by the Spirit in carrying out the work of salvation.

This module focuses on the role of the Holy Spirit in the Church, thereby preparing the candidate to assume more fully, in Confirmation, the Church's mission.

#### References

Relevant and helpful biblical citations, along with references to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), are provided. The structure of the module largely follows the Creed, and the presentation of the Church found in the *Catechism* (Part One, Section Two, Chapter Three, Article 9: "I Believe in the Holy Catholic Church," nos. 748–865, 946–959).

#### **The joint mission of the Son of God and the Holy Spirit culminates in the birth of the Church at Pentecost (CCC 731, 737).**

- I. The Church is the goal of God's plan of salvation (CCC 759, 760).
  - a. The Church is the gathering of all of those called to share the life of the Holy Trinity (CCC 751).
  - b. The word "Church" (in Greek: *Ekklesia*) means "those called together" by God (CCC 751).
  - c. God desires that all people belong to his Son, Jesus Christ: "In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ...He has made known to us the mystery of his will in accord with his favor that he set forth in him as plan for the fullness of times, to sum up all things in Christ, in heaven and on earth" (Ephesians 1:5, 9–10).
  - d. Thus, the Church is the handiwork of the Trinity: The Father gathers all people into the Body of his Son—the Church—by the power of the Holy Spirit (CCC 759).





## The Church's mission continues the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

1. The Church is currently on pilgrimage through history; she will be perfected at the end of time, when Christ returns in glory (CCC 769).
2. Meanwhile, the Church actively fulfills her mission by sharing with all people the message—the Gospel—that Jesus Christ is the Savior.
  - a. This carrying out of the Church's mission is the accomplishment of God's plan: people are saved by being "added" to the Body of Christ (Acts 2:47) (CCC 846).
  - b. "Outside the Church there is no salvation...All salvation comes from Christ the Head through the Church which is his Body" (CCC 846).
  - c. Although someone may be saved who, through no fault of his or her own, does not know the Gospel, the Church still has the responsibility of proclaiming the Gospel to all people (CCC 848).
3. The Church's mission begins at Pentecost and flows from the joint mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit (CCC 766–767).
  - a. Together, the Son of God and the Holy Spirit form the Church; they continue their mission in and through her.
  - b. At Pentecost, in a symbolic way, people from every nation hear the proclamation of the Gospel and believe in it (Acts 2:1–13) (CCC 767).
  - c. The Holy Spirit empowers the Church to carry out this mission of proclamation to all people, until Christ returns at the end of time (CCC 767–769).
  - d. As members of the Church, we belong to this community of salvation—and we are called to participate in her saving mission.

## We enter the Church by participating in the Paschal Mystery, which the Holy Spirit makes present in the Sacraments of Christian Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist).

1. A sacrament is an action of the Holy Spirit within the Church, which makes the Paschal Mystery—the Death, Resurrection, Ascension of Christ, and Pentecost—present by means of a visible sign (e.g., water, oil, bread and wine, laying on of hands, etc.) (CCC 1116).  
 The Paschal Mystery is the definitive event of salvation (CCC 601–605, 609, 613–617, 654).
2. Just as the Church was formed by the Paschal Mystery, so we enter the Church by participating in this same event, which the Holy Spirit makes present in the Sacraments of Christian Initiation (CCC 737):
  - a. The word *Baptism* means to be "plunged" or "immersed"—into the dying and rising of Christ (CCC 1214).
    - i. Through "water and the Holy Spirit" (John 3:5), we die to sin and rise to new life (Romans 6:2–4) (CCC 1215).
    - ii. Participation in the Paschal Mystery makes us members of the Body of Christ (CCC 1267).





- b. Confirmation strengthens (“confirms”) the grace of new life in Christ (CCC 1285, 1302).  
By bestowing the gifts of the Holy Spirit, Confirmation joins us more closely to the Church, and especially to her mission of proclaiming the Gospel (CCC 1302).
- c. Through the Eucharist we participate in the Death and Resurrection of Christ (CCC 1341, 1362–1367).  
The Holy Spirit enables us to offer this Sacrifice of Christ, which transforms bread and wine into his Body and Blood (CCC 1092).

### **The Holy Spirit forms the Church in the image of Jesus Christ.**

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1. The Creed includes the Church in the same paragraph as the Holy Spirit (CCC 749).
  - a. The Holy Spirit is at work in the Church.
  - b. The Church is the Temple of the Holy Spirit (CCC 797–798).
  
2. Christ, through the action of the Holy Spirit, makes the Church “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic” (CCC 811).  
In this way, the Church becomes a reflection of Christ and carries out his saving work.
  
3. The four “marks” or characteristics of the Church found in the Creed are revealed in the miracle of Pentecost (John 20:21–23, Acts 2:1–47).
  - a. **Mark 1: “One”**
    - i. The Holy Spirit unifies the Church amid different languages, cultures, and historical periods (CCC 813).
  - b. **Mark 2: “Holy”**
    - i. The *Holy* Spirit makes the Church *holy*: the gift of the Spirit keeps the Church, the bride, faithful to her bridegroom (husband), Christ (Ephesians 5: 22-23) (CCC 749, 796, 823).
    - ii. The Holy Spirit leads and guides the Church throughout the difficulties of history, until Christ returns (CCC 769).
    - iii. The Holy Spirit bestows special gifts (charisms) on the Church that strengthen her and “build her up” (Ephesians 4:11–12) (CCC 768, 799).
  - c. **Mark 3: “Catholic”**  
The gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost makes the Church catholic in the double sense that:
    - i. She receives the fullness of salvation (i.e., the Gospel message and the sacraments) (CCC 830–831);
    - ii. She is sent to share this salvation with the entire world (CCC 830–831).
  - d. **Mark 4: “Apostolic”**  
The Church is founded on the Apostles in three ways:
    - i. Christ chose the 12 Apostles to be witnesses of his Resurrection, and he commissioned them to continue his work (Matthew 28:16–20; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 9:1; 15:7–8; Galatians 1:1; etc.) (CCC 857).





- ii. By the working of the Holy Spirit, the Church hands on the teaching of the Apostles through her preaching of the Gospel, her celebration of the sacraments, and her testimony to Christ through works of charity (CCC 857).
  - iii. The Church continues to be governed by the successors of the Apostles, who are the bishops (apostolic succession) (CCC 857).
4. The four marks also mean that the Church is a communion of saints.
- a. The Church shares holy (“saintly”) goods among holy persons (“saints”) (CCC 948).
  - b. The “holy goods” include faith, the sacraments, spiritual gifts (charisms), and works of mercy and charity (CCC 949–953).
  - c. The holy persons include those already in heaven (saints), those being purified in preparation for heaven (Purgatory), and those living on earth (CCC 954).

### **Confirmation joins us more closely to the Church.**

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The Sacrament of Confirmation bestows upon each person an outpouring of the Holy Spirit who is continually at work in the Church.

The Spirit draws us more deeply into the Church’s unity and holiness (“one” and “holy”), precisely so that we may fulfill the Church’s mission of bringing the Gospel to all people (“catholic” and “apostolic”).

### **We live as members of the Church.**

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1. Owing to the work of the Holy Spirit, we belong to the community of salvation that is the Church.  
Therefore it is never a matter of just “me and God;” we belong to the Body of Christ, and we have a responsibility to one another—and to the world.
2. As members of the Church, we are empowered by the Spirit of God to bring salvation to all people, according to the concrete circumstances of our lives.
3. The Sacrament of Confirmation initiates us into this mission of the Church...





## MODULE III

### Confirmation: Initiation into Mission

#### Purpose and Objective

Confirmation binds a person more closely to the Church for the sake of her mission, which is to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all people.

This module focuses on Confirmation as a Sacrament of Christian Initiation, beginning with the sacramental nature of Jesus Christ. Through the working of the Holy Spirit, the saving work of Christ continues in the sacraments of the Church. As a sacrament, Confirmation completes and strengthens (“confirms”) the grace of Baptism, and leads to the Eucharist. Confirmation provides a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as was bestowed upon the Apostles at Pentecost.

The module also reviews the Rite of Confirmation, whose signs and symbols express the meaning and effects of the sacrament. By virtue of Confirmation, a Catholic contributes to the ongoing mission of the Church in the world.

#### References

Relevant and helpful biblical citations, along with references to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), are provided. The structure of the module largely follows the presentation of Confirmation found in the *Catechism* (Part Two, Section Two, Chapter One, Article 2: “The Sacrament of Confirmation,” nos. 1285–1321).

#### The Church is the sacrament of God’s mission to the world.

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1. As seen in the previous module, the Church is an essential part of God’s plan, a continuation of the Holy Trinity’s mission to the world (Matthew 28:19–20).
2. Phrased another way, the Church is the *sacrament* of God’s saving mission: she announces and makes God present in the world (CCC 738, 850).

#### The seven sacraments are based upon the sacramental nature of Jesus Christ and the Church.

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1. The sacred humanity of Christ, anointed by the Holy Spirit, is the sacrament of God (CCC 515, 774).
  - a. By becoming human, and through his public ministry and saving work, Jesus brings God’s presence fully into the world.
  - b. Through Christ’s Incarnation and Paschal Mystery, God saves humanity (Colossians 1:15–20).





2. The Church is the sacrament of Christ's sacred humanity and saving work (CCC 774; see also 775–776).
  - a. As the Body of Christ, the Church is the visible sign of Jesus' presence.
    - i. Saint Paul came to realize this in a personal and profound way at his conversion (Acts 9:4–5; 22:6–8; 26:14–15).
  - b. Through her life and mission, the Church puts people in relationship (in “communion”) with God (CCC 775).
    - i. This is especially true of the seven sacraments, which deepen our relationship with God.
  - c. The Church is also the sacrament—i.e., the sign and instrument—of the unity of the human family (CCC 775).
  - d. More than just a social gathering of like-minded people, the Church is the “convocation” of all people into Christ for salvation (CCC 767).
    - i. This is evident at Pentecost, as representatives of the whole world are united in receiving the message of salvation (Acts 2: 1–13).
    - ii. This continues to be manifested in the Church's unity and catholicity (see Module II).

### **The Holy Spirit makes the saving work of Christ—the Paschal Mystery-- present in the Church's sacraments.**

1. The Church is the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12–27), “born” of the Paschal Mystery (CCC 766–767).
  - a. From Christ's Body—the Church—come the sacraments.
  - b. This is symbolized by the flow of blood (the Eucharist) and water (Baptism) from the pierced side of Christ (John 19:34).
2. Christ is the Head of the Body (Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18), and the Holy Spirit is like the “soul” of the Body (CCC 797).
3. In the sacraments, the Holy Spirit spreads the grace of Christ the Head throughout the members of the Body (CCC 774).
4. This begins at Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit enables the Church to continually participate in the saving work of Christ's Death and Resurrection (CCC 1086, 1092, 1099, 1104–1106).

After Pentecost, the Apostles begin to preach, baptize, forgive sins, confer the Holy Spirit, and celebrate the Eucharist (see, for example, Acts 2:36–38, 41–42).

5. The celebration of the sacraments goes hand in hand with the proclamation of the Gospel and the communal life; together, these elements constitute the Church's mission (see, for example, Acts 4:32–34, 8:26–40, 11:19–26).





## **As a Sacrament of Christian Initiation, Confirmation completes Baptism and points to the Eucharist.**

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1. Like the earliest disciples, we enter the Church by hearing the proclamation of the Gospel and, inspired by the Holy Spirit, receive the Church's sacraments (see, for example, Acts 2:36–42).
2. The Sacraments of Christian Initiation—Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist—are the foundation of Christian life, because they give us a share in God's own life through the Paschal Mystery (CCC 1212).
3. As the gift of the Holy Spirit completed Baptism among the early disciples, so Confirmation completes of the grace of Baptism now (Acts 8:15–17; 19:5–6; Hebrews 6:2) (CCC 1285, 1288).
4. Pentecost fulfilled the Paschal Mystery because the arrival of the Holy Spirit enabled all people to gain access the Death and Resurrection of the Christ in the Church.
5. Similarly, the gift of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation leads to the Eucharist, which is the fullest sharing in the Paschal Mystery (CCC 1323, 1362–1367).
  - a. Although, today, First Holy Communion is typically received after Confirmation, the Eucharist is nevertheless the climax and goal of Christian initiation (CCC 1322, 1324).
  - b. All of the sacraments point to the Eucharist as their goal, which continually nourishes us (CCC 1322, 1324).

## **The liturgy of Confirmation expresses the effects of the sacrament.**

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1. Those to be confirmed renew the promises of Baptism.<sup>53</sup>  
This rite illustrates the connection between Confirmation and Baptism (CCC 1289).

Confirmation strengthens (“confirms”) baptismal grace (CCC 1289), not in the sense that Baptism needs to be ratified in order to be effective (CCC 1308), but rather in the sense of orienting baptismal grace toward the Church's mission:

“By the sacrament of Confirmation, [the baptized] are more perfectly bound to the Church and are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit. Hence they are, as true witnesses of Christ, more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> *Rite of Confirmation*, no. 23.

<sup>54</sup> Vatican Council II, *Lumen gentium*, no. 11; quoted in CCC 1285. Cf. CCC 1303.







2. After receiving Confirmation, the confirmands will participate, as they normally do, in the Eucharistic Prayer and receive Holy Communion.  
This illustrates the connection between Confirmation and the Eucharist, and how Confirmation—like Baptism and all the sacraments—leads to the Eucharist (CCC 1298).
3. The bishop imposes his hands on those to be confirmed, which signifies the invocation and gift of the Holy Spirit (CCC 1299).
4. In our Church today (the Roman Rite of the Latin Church), Confirmation is conferred in the following way: “The anointing of chrism on the forehead, which is done by the laying on of the hand, and through the words: ‘Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit’” (CCC 1300).<sup>55</sup>
5. Therefore, the key symbols of Confirmation are the laying on of hands and the anointing with chrism.
  - a. Laying on of hands signifies the gift of the Holy Spirit.  
The Apostles laid hands on those who were baptized in order to give them the gift of the Holy Spirit (CCC 1288; see Acts 8:15–17; 19:5–6; and Hebrews 6:2).
  - b. Anointing with chrism signifies the gift of the Holy Spirit as a mark or seal.
    - i. Early in the Church’s tradition, the practice of anointing with oil was added to the laying on of hands (CCC 1289).
      - This shows that being *anointed* means being *chosen* by God, after the example of the prophets, kings, and—above all—Jesus the Christ (see Module I).
    - ii. According to Saint Paul, the anointing of Holy Spirit, which is first received at Baptism (CCC 1241), is a “seal,” marking our “total belonging to Christ” (CCC 1296). (See 2 Corinthians 1:22; cf. Ephesians 1:14; 4:30; Romans 5:5; 8:23.)
    - iii. Confirmation bestows a “mark” or “character” that cannot be erased or repeated (CCC 1295).
6. Confirmation strengthens the grace of Baptism by joining us more closely to the Church, for the sake of her mission to the world. Therefore, the sacrament:
  - a. Deepens our relationship with God
  - b. Increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit (see Module IV)
  - c. “Gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly, and never to be ashamed of the Cross” (CCC 1303).

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<sup>55</sup> For more information about the Laying On of Hands, see Appendix B.





7. Thus, Confirmation helps us to carry out the Church's mission to the world...





## MODULE IV

### The Mission of Discipleship: A Life of Witness

#### Purpose and Objective

Participating in the Church's mission means becoming a more committed disciple of Jesus Christ. Discipleship is a response to the grace of the Holy Spirit, who empowers a person to follow and bear witness to Christ. Particularly through special gifts bestowed in Confirmation, the Spirit of God brings about greater holiness of life. The Holy Spirit is also the "Master of Prayer," leading disciples into a deeper relationship with God.

This module explores the moral dimension of Confirmation and the sacrament's relation to prayer, with a particular emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in helping one live the Catholic faith. Accordingly, the candidates for Confirmation will be prepared to give more convincing testimony to Jesus Christ as members of the Church.

#### References

Relevant and helpful biblical citations, along with references to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) and the *Rite of Confirmation* (RC), are provided. The module draws from the third part of the *Catechism* ("Life in Christ"), particularly Section One, Chapter One, Article Seven ("The Human Virtues," "The Theological Virtues," and "The Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit," no. 1803–1845); and Section One, Chapter Two, Article Two ("Participation in Social Life," no. 1897–1927), and Article Three ("Social Justice," no. 1928–1948). It also draws on Part Four of the *Catechism* ("Christian Prayer"), particularly Section One, Chapter Two, Article One ("At the Wellspring of Prayer," nos. 2652–2662).

#### Mission takes the form of discipleship.

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1. Discipleship continually testifies to the presence and power of Christ.
2. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we participate in the Church's mission by bearing witness to Jesus Christ (see Acts 1:8).
3. Our mission is to become witnesses of God's saving work in us.
  - a. Following the example of the first disciples, we share with others our own experience of the Lord (see Luke 9:1–6; 10:1–12, 17–20; 24:48–49; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 15:3–10).
  - b. Hearing the Gospel, celebrating the sacraments, and living the Christian life, Catholics are called to share this salvation with the world.





### **The mission of discipleship is a response to the grace of the Holy Spirit.**

1. In Baptism, the Holy Spirit “plunges” us (the meaning of the term *Baptism*) into Christ’s Death and Resurrection, which detaches us from sin and bestows a new life of grace (see Rom 6:8–11) (CCC 1987–1995).
  - This action and presence of the Holy Spirit makes us the adopted children of God, enabling us to bear witness to what God has accomplished in us (see Rom 8:14–16) (CCC 1996–1997, 1999).
2. In Confirmation, we receive the same outpouring of the Holy Spirit that the Apostles received at Pentecost (Acts 2:1–13) (RC 1).
3. This sacrament *commissions* us—as the Holy Spirit did the Apostles—to make known the promise of salvation in Jesus Christ (RC 2).
  - a. Mission is a response, and a witness, to the gift of the Holy Spirit received in Confirmation.
  - b. This is what it means to speak of the Holy Spirit as the Paraclete or “consoler:” “When he proclaims and promises the coming of the Holy Spirit, Jesus calls him the ‘Paraclete,’ literally ‘he who is called to one’s side,’ *ad-vocatus* [advocate]” (CCC 692). (See John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7.)
  - c. The Holy Spirit helps us to understand and live the saving truth that Christ has given us, and to share that truth with all people.
4. Therefore, the moral life—how we choose to live—is fundamentally a response to God’s grace.
  - a. We do not do good in an effort to earn salvation (the heresy of Pelagianism) (CCC 1996).
  - b. Rather, we do good in response and in gratitude for God’s action, and because God is the one doing it in us (CCC 2001–2002).

### **The Holy Spirit cultivates virtues by bestowing special gifts.**

1. The presence of the Holy Spirit continually inspires conversion, helping us to turn away from sin and turn toward grace (CCC 1989, 1995).
2. The Holy Spirit also cultivates virtues by bestowing special gifts (CCC 2003).
  - a. Virtues are dispositions to do what is good, and to give the best of oneself (CCC 1803).
    - i. The three theological virtues come from God himself: faith, hope, and love (1 Corinthians 12:3) (CCC 1813).
      - a) They are a sign that the Holy Spirit is present within us, and will continue to make us holy (Romans 8:9–13).
    - ii. The human virtues are acquired by our response to God’s grace.
      - a) The four main ones are known as the cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance (see Wisdom 8:7) (CCC 1805).
  - b. Among the gifts that the Holy Spirit bestows are the graces of the sacraments, including Confirmation (CCC 2003).





- i. The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are new attitudes God gives us, especially in the Sacrament of Confirmation, to help us be disciples: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord (see Isaiah 11:1–2) (CCC 1831).
  - a) The gifts of the Holy Spirit, because they belong fully to Christ, help us to be like Him (CCC 1831).
  - b) “This giving of the Holy Spirit conforms believers more fully to Christ and strengthens them so that they may bear witness to Christ for the building up of his Body in faith and love” (RC 1).

### **The Holy Spirit strengthens disciples to testify to Jesus Christ by word and deed.**

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1. The 12 fruits of the Holy Spirit are signs of our growth as disciples (Galatians 5:22–23):
  1. Charity
  2. Joy
  3. Peace
  4. Patience
  5. Kindness
  6. Goodness
  7. Generosity
  8. Gentleness
  9. Faithfulness
  10. Modesty
  11. Self-control
  12. Chastity

These fruits are a kind of “down payment” on God’s work of bringing us to perfection as followers of Christ (see 2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:14; Romans 8:23) (CCC 1832).

2. The grace of the Holy Spirit received in Confirmation therefore commits us to testifying to Jesus Christ by our life (CCC 1285).
3. We live this mission of discipleship by our words and actions.
  - a. Authentic witness requires that we practice our Catholic faith.
  - b. Like the prophets who were inspired by the Holy Spirit, we speak the truth that ultimately refers to Christ (Creed: “He has spoken through the prophets”) (CCC 719).  
John the Baptist is the outstanding example of a Spirit-filled prophet who testifies to Christ (Luke 1:15, cited in CCC 717–720).

### **As the community of Christ’s disciples, the Church consecrates the world to God.**

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1. Disciples seek not only to lead individual lives of holiness, but also to change the world for the better (CCC 854).





- a. This is the particular responsibility of lay people (CCC 898; see also CCC 899–900, 2442).
  - b. This “social work” prepares for God’s ultimate renewal of the universe that will be the Church’s perfection, when Christ returns at the end of time (see Rom 8:19–22) (CCC 669, 671, 769, 775).
2. The Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy are concrete ways in which Catholics participate in the Church’s mission, living as disciples of Jesus Christ and witnesses to the power of the Holy Spirit (CCC 2447).

#### Spiritual Works of Mercy

- Counseling the doubtful
- Instructing the ignorant
- Admonishing the sinner
- Comforting the sorrowful
- Forgiving injuries
- Bearing wrongs patiently
- Praying for the living and the dead

#### Corporal Works of Mercy (Matthew 25:31–46)

- Feeding the hungry
- Giving drink to the thirsty
- Clothing the naked
- Sheltering the homeless
- Visiting the sick
- Visiting the imprisoned
- Burying the dead

3. Beyond the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy, the Church’s social doctrine guides us in building a more just society (CCC 2419–2423).
- a. This teaching is based upon the principle that society should seek the common good, which refers to the conditions that enable people “to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily” (CCC 1906).
    - i. The common good consists of three essential elements: respect for the dignity of the human person, social well-being and development, and peace and security (CCC 1906–1909).
  - b. Other important social themes and tasks include:
    - Family as the basis of society (CCC 2207–2213)
    - Subsidiarity (CCC 1883–1885)
    - Personal responsibility (CCC 1914)
    - Participation in civic life (CCC 1915)
    - Solidarity (CCC 1939–1942)
    - Dignity of work (CCC 2427–2436)
    - Special love for the poor (CCC 2443–2449)





## Discipleship grows and develops in prayer, aided by the Holy Spirit.

1. Prayer deepens our relationship with the Holy Trinity; it unites us with the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit (CCC 2014).
2. “The Holy Spirit, whose anointing permeates our whole being, is the interior Master of Christian prayer” (CCC 2672; see also 2652).
  - a. The Holy Spirit prays in us, drawing us closer to God (Romans 8:26–27).
  - b. Therefore, prayer is not only something that we do; it is God’s work in us.
  - c. “By a living transmission—Tradition—the Holy Spirit in the Church teaches the children of God to pray” (CCC 2661).
 

“The Word of God, the liturgy of the Church, and the virtues of faith, hope, and charity are sources of prayer” (CCC 2662).

    1. Praying with Scripture: *lectio divina* (literally, “divine reading”).<sup>56</sup>
    2. Praying the liturgy (i.e., divine worship): the sacraments, especially the Mass (CCC 1359–1361).
    3. Praying in response to the theological virtues (CCC 2656–2658).
3. To receive the Father’s gift of the Spirit, Jesus teaches us to ask the Holy Spirit to come (see Luke 11:13, cited in CCC 2671).
4. We are encouraged to likewise invoke the Holy Spirit:

### Prayer to the Holy Spirit:

V./ Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.

R./ And enkindle in them the fire of your live.

V./ Send forth your Spirit and we shall be created.

R./ And you shall renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray:

O God,

who instructed the hearts of the faithful

by the light of your divine Spirit,

grant us by that same Holy Spirit to be truly wise

and to rejoice in your consolation

through the same Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

<sup>56</sup> See Appendix C: “Praying with Scripture: *Lectio Divina*.”





The Prayer to the Holy Spirit echoes Scripture and the liturgical tradition of the Church. The first verse and response constitute the Alleluia for Pentecost Sunday: “Alleluia. Alleluia. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of the faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Alleluia. Alleluia.”<sup>57</sup> The second verse and response are drawn from Psalm 104, which is the Responsorial Psalm for Pentecost Sunday: “Send forth your spirit, they are created and you renew the face of the earth” (Psalm 104:30).

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<sup>57</sup> *Lectionary for Mass*, no. 63 ABC.







## **PHASE III**

# **Reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation**

Please contact the Office of Worship  
for information regarding the  
liturgical celebration of Confirmation.





## Discerning Readiness for Confirmation

*We pray for these your servants who have opened  
their ears and hearts to your word.  
Grant that they may grasp your moment of grace.<sup>58</sup>*

As Catholics, we listen and respond to the call of God throughout our lives. “Discovering who God intends us to be (our truest self), what God is asking of us at this moment in our life, and making a decision to act is called discernment.”<sup>59</sup>

*To the candidates for Confirmation:*

You have been discerning throughout this time of preparation: You have learned to listen to God’s voice each day, by growing in your knowledge of the faith, participating in the sacramental life of the Church, deepening your personal prayer, being active in community living (family life, parish life, and among your peers), and maturing in your understanding and fidelity to the Church’s teaching and mission.

Here are some questions to ask yourself as you discern your readiness to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. Call upon the Holy Spirit as you prayerfully reflect on these questions. Write down your responses. Be honest with yourself. You might want to discuss these questions with someone you trust—another young person who is also discerning, your Confirmation sponsor, or your parents. Remember, God’s Spirit is in you; you have only to listen and respond.

- Is it your desire to become a fully initiated member of the Catholic Church by receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation?
- If you have answered “yes,” why do you want to be confirmed? Why do you think that you are ready?
- What has been the most important thing you have learned about God and the Church during these past months?
- How have you seen God working in your life during the preparation process?
- What is your prayer life like? Do you turn to God in prayer ... when ... why? Do you believe in God? Do you have a personal relationship with the Lord?
- In what ways have you become involved in the life of your parish? Do you attend Mass regularly? Do you attend other parish activities?

<sup>58</sup> RCIA, no. 102.

<sup>59</sup> See “Discernment” (available at [www.TeamRCIA.com](http://www.TeamRCIA.com)).





- Why is it important for you to worship in your parish on Sunday? Why is it important for you to be a part of the Catholic community?
- Do you embrace the teachings of Jesus Christ and the demands of discipleship? What are some teachings of the Catholic faith that you struggle with? How do you deal with uncertainty and doubts?
- Do you believe the fundamentals of Christianity, and do you practice these beliefs by how you live each day?
- Name some of the ways in which you serve others in your family, school, or community.
- Do you accept what the Catholic Church believes, teaches, and proclaims?

The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* reminds us that the Holy Spirit opens the hearts of those who seek to deepen their faith: “By God’s help they will be strengthened spiritually during their preparation and at the proper time will receive the sacraments fruitfully.”<sup>60</sup> You already belong to the Body of Christ through your Baptism and participation in the Holy Eucharist. If you determine that you need more time to better understand and embrace the grace of Confirmation, or to grow in the Catholic way of life, you may postpone receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation. However, know that Christian discipleship is a journey of a lifetime, and so you do not have to know everything about the faith in order to be confirmed; rather, you must have a desire and a faith-filled intention to grow in wisdom, knowledge, love, and service of the Lord. The Body of Christ—the Church—is continually praying for you. Know, too, that the Lord is with you!

*Your servants knock at the door of your truth,  
because in the truth of your only-begotten Son  
they know the inexpressible love that you have for [humankind] [sic]  
As a result, the fire of your love ought not and cannot refrain  
from opening to one who knocks with perseverance....  
Grant the prayer of those, eternal Father,  
who, as you see, stand at the door of your truth and pray.  
—Saint Catherine of Siena*

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<sup>60</sup> RCIA, no. I.



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## PHASE IV: Mystagogy

### **Mystagogy**

Preparing confirmands to enter more fully into the life of the Church

- Part 1: Preparing for the Eucharist
- Part 2: Source and Summit





## Mystagogy

*Mystagogy* refers to the period of reflection and instruction that follows the reception of a sacrament such as Confirmation. This is a privileged time in which the newly confirmed come to appreciate the magnitude of the grace received, as well as the meaning and implication of the sacrament in their lives. As indicated in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, this process is meant to foster an even stronger connection and commitment to the Eucharist:

Under the moderation of the diocesan bishop, the mystagogy should embrace a deepened understanding of the mysteries of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist, and especially of the Eucharist as the continuing celebration of faith and conversion.<sup>61</sup>

### Minimum Contact Hours: 3

### Begin with Prayer

#### Mystagogical Prayer Experience regarding Confirmation

(Place the young people in groups of five to eight, with a facilitator if possible.)

- As you waited for the celebration of the sacrament to begin, what were you thinking?
- Were you nervous, excited, anxious, etc.? (Share answers.)
- The celebration began by welcoming the bishop, the minister of Confirmation, with the entrance song of Mass.
- (Sing the refrain from the entrance song.)
- We blessed ourselves and in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, recalling our Baptism.
- We heard readings from the books of... And the Gospel according to ...
- (Proclaim one or more of those readings; sing the responsorial Psalm.)
- Reflect on the bishop's homily.
  - What do you remember? What struck you? (Share.)
- Think about how it felt when you were asked to stand and the bishop prayed over you. (Pray a few words of that prayer; recite a few phrases from the Renewal of Baptismal Promises.<sup>62</sup>)
- How did it feel to renew your baptismal promises? Have you ever done that before? What did the words mean to you? (Share.)
- As you were presented to the bishop, anointed with oil and offered the sign of peace, how did it feel? What were you thinking? (Share.)
- As we gathered for the Liturgy of the Eucharist, did you feel different? What were you thinking? (Share.)

<sup>61</sup> RCIA, Appendix C, *National Statutes for the Catechumenate*, no. 23.

<sup>62</sup> *Rite of Confirmation*, no. 23. (The renewal of baptismal promise is also found in the "Rite of Recognition and Call to Confirmation," pages 31—32.)





- We concluded this celebration by being sent forth, and we went forth singing. (Sing the refrain from the closing song.)
- Now that the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation is over, what is next?
  - What is God calling you to do, or to be in the coming months and years?

**Part One: Preparing for the Eucharist (Option: Watch video, *Why We Go To Mass?*)**

- What do I bring to the Eucharist?
  - How do I prepare for Mass?
  - How does the Church prepare for Mass?
    - (Option: have the newly confirmed actually prepare for Mass)
    - Discuss the readings of the day
    - Talk about the preparation of the sacred space
    - Sing the Responsorial Psalm
- After the celebration of the Mass, how am I changed?
  - We are changed every time we participate in the Eucharist.
  - What is expected of us?

**Part Two: Source and Summit**

- The Eucharist (Mass) is an “ongoing sacrament.”
  - We gather every Sunday to draw strength from the Word of God, to offer the sacrifice of Christ, and to receive the Body and Blood of Christ, all so that we can continue to do the work of Christ in the world.
  - How do you become Christ in the world?
- The Eucharist is the “source and summit” of our faith.<sup>63</sup> What does that mean for my life?
- “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.”
  - The Mass (*Missa* in Latin) takes its name from this rite of sending (dismissal) at the end of the celebration.
  - What does the Dismissal rite of Mass call us to do?
    - Serve the body of Christ.
    - Community—build up the Kingdom of God.
    - Discipleship

**Option: Conclude by celebrating Mass**

**Suggested Resources:**

*Saying Amen: Mystagogy of Sacrament*, by Kathleen Hughes

Video: *Why We Go To Mass*, by Rev. J. Glen Murray

Video: *Send Forth*, by Rev. J. Glen Murray

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<sup>63</sup> *Catechism*, no. 1324.



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# APPENDICES





## APPENDIX A

### Canon Law Related to Confirmation

#### Part I: The Sacraments

##### Canon 840:

The sacraments of the New Testament were instituted by Christ the Lord and entrusted to the Church. As actions of Christ and of the Church, they are signs and means by which faith is expressed and strengthened, worship is offered to God, and our sanctification is brought about. Thus they contribute in the most effective manner to establishing, strengthening, and manifesting ecclesiastical communion. Accordingly, in the celebration of the sacraments both the sacred ministers and all the other members of Christ's faithful must show great reverence and due care.

##### Canon 841:

Since the sacraments are the same throughout the universal Church, and belong to the divine deposit of faith, only the supreme authority in the Church can approve or define what is needed for their validity. It belongs to the same authority, or to another competent authority in accordance with Can. 838 §3 and 4, to determine what is required for their lawful celebration, administration, and reception and for the order to be observed in their celebration.

##### Canon 842:

§1 A person who has not received baptism cannot validly be admitted to the other sacraments.

§2 The Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and the blessed Eucharist so complement one another that all three are required for full Christian initiation.

##### Canon 843:

§1 Sacred ministers may not deny the sacraments to those who opportunely ask for them, are properly disposed, and are not prohibited by law from receiving them.

§2 According to their respective offices in the Church, both pastors of souls and all other members of Christ's faithful have a duty to ensure that those who ask for the sacraments are prepared for their reception. This should be done through proper evangelization and catechetical instruction, in accordance with the norms laid down by the competent authority.

##### Canon 844:

§1 Catholic ministers may lawfully administer the sacraments only to Catholic members of Christ's faithful, who equally may lawfully receive them only from Catholic ministers, except as provided in §2, 3, and 4 of this canon and in Can. 861 §2.

§2 Whenever necessity requires or a genuine spiritual advantage commends it, and provided the danger of error or indifferentism is avoided, Christ's faithful for whom it is physically or morally impossible to approach a Catholic minister, may lawfully receive the Sacraments of Penance, the Eucharist, and anointing of the sick from non-Catholic ministers in whose Churches these sacraments are valid.





§3 Catholic ministers may lawfully administer the Sacraments of Penance, the Eucharist, and anointing of the sick to members of the eastern Churches not in full communion

with the Catholic Church, if they spontaneously ask for them and are properly disposed. The same applies to members of other Churches which the Apostolic See judges to be in the same position as the aforesaid eastern Churches so far as the sacraments are concerned.

§4 If there is a danger of death or if, in the judgment of the diocesan bishop or of the Episcopal Conference, there is some other grave and pressing need, Catholic ministers may lawfully administer these same sacraments to other Christians not in full communion with the Catholic Church, who cannot approach a minister of their own community and who spontaneously ask for them, provided that they demonstrate the Catholic faith in respect of these sacraments and are properly disposed.

§5 In respect of the cases dealt with in §2, 3, and 4, the diocesan bishop or the Episcopal Conference is not to issue general norms except after consultation with the competent authority, at least at the local level, of the non-Catholic Church or community concerned.

Canon 845:

§1 Because they imprint a character, the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Order cannot be repeated.

§2 If after diligent enquiry a prudent doubt remains as to whether the sacraments mentioned in §1 have been conferred at all, or conferred validly, they are to be conferred conditionally.

Canon 846:

§1 The liturgical books, approved by the competent authority, are to be faithfully followed in the celebration of the sacraments. Accordingly, no one may on a personal initiative add to or omit or alter anything in those books.

§2 The ministers are to celebrate the sacraments according to their own rite.

Canon 847:

§1 In administering sacraments in which holy oils are to be used, the minister must use oil made from olives or other plants, which, except as provided in Can. 999, n. 2, has recently been consecrated or blessed by a bishop. Older oil is not to be used except in a case of necessity.

§2 The parish priest is to obtain the holy oils from his own bishop and keep them carefully in fitting custody.

Canon 848:

For the administration of the sacraments the minister may not ask for anything beyond the offerings which are determined by the competent authority, and he must always ensure that the needy are not deprived of the help of the sacraments by reason of poverty.





## **Title II: The Sacrament of Confirmation**

### Canon 879:

The Sacrament of Confirmation confers a character. By it the baptized continue their path of Christian initiation. They are enriched with the gift of the Holy Spirit, and are more closely linked to the Church. They are made strong and more firmly obliged by word and deed to witness to Christ and to spread and defend the faith.

### **Chapter I: The Celebration of Confirmation**

#### Canon 880:

§1 The Sacrament of Confirmation is conferred by anointing with chrism on the forehead in a laying on of hands, and by the words prescribed in the approved liturgical books.

§2 The chrism to be used in the Sacrament of Confirmation must have been consecrated by a bishop, even when the sacrament is administered by a priest.

#### Canon 881:

It is desirable that the Sacrament of Confirmation be celebrated in a church and indeed during Mass. However, for a just and reasonable cause it may be celebrated apart from Mass and in any fitting place.

### **Chapter II: The Minister of Confirmation**

#### Canon 882:

The ordinary minister of Confirmation is a bishop. A priest can also validly confer this sacrament if he has the faculty to do so, either from the general law or by way of a special grant from the competent authority.

#### Canon 883:

The following have, by law, the faculty to administer Confirmation:

- 1° within the confines of their jurisdiction, those who in law are equivalent to a diocesan bishop;
- 2° in respect of the person to be confirmed, the priest who by virtue of his office or by mandate of the diocesan bishop baptizes an adult or admits a baptized adult into full communion with the Catholic Church;
- 3° in respect of those in danger of death, the parish priest, or indeed any priest.

#### Canon 884:

§1 The diocesan bishop is himself to administer Confirmation or to ensure that it is administered by another bishop. If necessity so requires, he may grant to one or several specified priests the faculty to administer this sacrament.

§2 For a grave reason the bishop, or the priest who by law or by special grant of the competent authority has the faculty to confirm, may in individual cases invite other priests to join with him in administering the sacrament.



**Canon 885:**

§1 The diocesan bishop is bound to ensure that the Sacrament of Confirmation is conferred upon his subjects who duly and reasonably request it.

§2 A priest who has this faculty must use it for those in whose favor it was granted.

**Canon 886:**

§1 A bishop in his own diocese may lawfully administer the Sacrament of Confirmation even to the faithful who are not his subjects, unless there is an express prohibition by their own Ordinary.

§2 In order lawfully to administer Confirmation in another diocese, unless it be to his own subjects, a bishop needs the permission, at least reasonably presumed, of the diocesan bishop.

**Canon 887:**

A priest who has the faculty to administer Confirmation may, within the territory assigned to him, lawfully administer this sacrament even to those from outside the territory, unless there is a prohibition by their own Ordinary. He cannot, however, validly confirm anyone in another territory, without prejudice to the provision of Can. 883, n.3.

**Canon 888:**

Within the territory in which they can confer Confirmation, ministers may confirm even in exempt places.

**Chapter III: The Persons to be Confirmed****Canon 889:**

§1 Every baptized person who is not confirmed, and only such a person, is capable of receiving Confirmation.

§2 Apart from the danger of death, to receive Confirmation lawfully a person who has the use of reason must be suitably instructed, properly disposed, and able to renew the baptismal promises.

**Canon 890:**

The faithful are bound to receive this sacrament at the proper time. Parents and pastors of souls, especially parish priests, are to see that the faithful are properly instructed to receive the sacrament and come to it at the opportune time.

**Canon 891:**

The Sacrament of Confirmation is to be conferred on the faithful at about the age of discretion, unless the Episcopal Conference has decided on a different age, or there is a danger of death or, in the judgment of the minister, a grave reason suggests otherwise.

**Chapter IV: Sponsors****Canon 892:**

As far as possible, the person to be confirmed is to have a sponsor. The sponsor's function is to take care that the person confirmed behaves as a true witness of Christ and faithfully fulfils the duties inherent in this sacrament.



**Canon 893:**

§1 A person who would undertake the office of sponsor must fulfill the conditions mentioned in Can. 874 which reads:

*§1 To be admitted to undertake the office of sponsor, a person must:*

- 1° be appointed by the candidate for Baptism, or by the parents or whoever stands in their place, or failing these, by the parish priest or the minister; to be appointed the person must be suitable for this role and have the intention of fulfilling it;
- 2° be not less than sixteen years of age, unless a different age has been stipulated by the diocesan bishop, or unless the parish priest or the minister considers that there is a just reason for an exception to be made;
- 3° be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has received the blessed Eucharist, and who lives a life of faith which befits the role to be undertaken;
- 4° not labor under a canonical penalty, whether imposed or declared;
- 5° not be either the father or the mother of the person to be baptized.

§2 A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community may be admitted only in company with a Catholic sponsor, and then simply as a witness to the Baptism.

*§2 It is desirable that the sponsor chosen be the one who undertook this role at Baptism.*

**Chapter V: Proof and Registration of Confirmation****Canon 894:**

To establish that Confirmation has been conferred, the provisions of Can. 876 are to be observed.

**Canon 895:**

The names of those confirmed, the minister, the parents, the sponsors, and the place and date of the Confirmation are to be recorded in the Confirmation register of the diocesan curia or, wherever this has been prescribed by the Episcopal Conference or by the diocesan bishop, in the register to be kept in the parochial archive. The parish priest must notify the parish priest of the place of the Baptism that the Confirmation was conferred, so that it be recorded in the baptismal register, in accordance with Can. 535 §2 which reads “In the register of Baptisms, a note is to be made of Confirmation and of matters pertaining to the canonical status of the faithful by reason of marriage, without prejudice to the provision of Can. 1133, and by reason of adoption, the reception of sacred order, the making of perpetual profession in a religious institute, or a change of rite. These annotations are always to be reproduced on a baptismal certificate.”

**Canon 891:**

If the parish priest of the place was not present, the minister, personally or through someone else, is to notify him as soon as possible that the Confirmation was conferred.





## APPENDIX B

### Laying on of Hands

The Laying on of Hands (plural), which precedes the Anointing with Chrism, is different from the laying on of the hand (singular), which accompanies the anointing. In the first gesture, the bishop extends his hand over the entire group of confirmands and recites the appropriate prayer; in the second gesture, he places his hand atop the crown of each confirmand, simultaneously tracing the Sign of the Cross on the forehead with chrism while saying, “N., be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Thus, “In the rites of the Latin Church a laying of hands on those to be confirmed prior to anointing them with chrism was always prescribed. ...But the laying of hands on the elect, carried out with the prescribed prayer before the anointing, is still to be regarded as very important, even if is not of the essence of the sacramental rite: it contributes to the complete perfection of the rite and to a more thorough understanding of the sacrament. It is evident that this prior laying on of *hands* differs from the later laying on of *the hand* in the anointing of the forehead” (Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Constitution on the Sacrament of Confirmation, *Divinae consortium naturae* [1971]).

Given the ancient liturgical practice and the current theological uncertainty about what constitutes the “matter” of the Sacrament of Confirmation—either the imposition of the hand or the anointing with chrism—the Church has deemed that both should be done simultaneously. The Church has also clarified that, in the event that the hand is not placed on the confirmand’s head, the anointing with chrism, by itself, sufficiently expresses the laying on of the hand (Pontifical Council for the Interpretation of the Decrees of Vatican Council II, reply, June 9, 1972). This authoritative interpretation suggests that the laying on of the hand and the anointing with chrism constitute a single action.





## APPENDIX C

### Praying with Scripture: *Lectio Divina*

*Through his Word, God speaks to man.  
By words, mental or vocal, our prayer takes flesh.<sup>64</sup>*

There is a long tradition of *lectio divina* (literally, “divine reading”) in the Church. This is the practice of praying with the Bible. We often get distracted in prayer, so it is helpful to have a biblical passage to help us concentrate and focus on God.<sup>65</sup> This practice is similar to meditating upon the life and mission of Christ in the Rosary.<sup>66</sup>

#### **A method for *lectio divina*:**

1. Silence
  - Start with one or two minutes of pure silence, to quiet the mind and prepare to listen to the word of God.
  
2. Lectio: Read
  - Read—slowly—a biblical passage several times.
  
3. Meditatio: Meditate
  - Think of what struck you the most: a phrase, an idea, or an image.
  - Consider the importance of this phrase, idea, or image with respect to your life right now.
  - Alternatively, imagine that you are participating in the biblical scene (for example, that Jesus is speaking to you).
  
4. Oratio: Pray
  - “Hold” the phrase, idea, or image before you, without thinking about it.
  - Try to listen, in silence, to what God may be saying to you through this phrase, idea, or image.
  - Then, pray about what the Lord may have revealed to you through the passage.
  
5. Contemplatio: Contemplation
  - In silence and thanksgiving, contemplate the presence of God who speaks to us through Scripture.
  - This is the goal of *lectio divina*—to bring you to this moment of intimacy with God.

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<sup>64</sup> *Catechism*, no. 2700.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 2705.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 2708.

