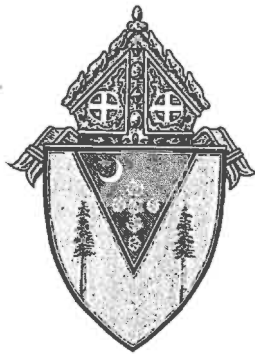


Office of the Bishop

Phone: (707) 566-3325
Email: BpVasa@SRDiocese.org



Diocese of Santa Rosa

P.O. Box 1297
Santa Rosa, California 95402

Memo: To all Pastors
From: Bishop Vasa
Date: May 23, 2013
Re: Preferred Age for the Sacrament of Confirmation

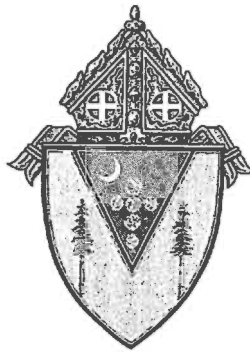
I have often expressed my desire for the Sacrament of Confirmation to be conferred prior to High School so that the timely receipt of the grace of this Sacrament, which is so much needed by Jr and Sr High School students, is not denied to them.

I understand the tradition in many Dioceses across the country of conferring this Sacrament in High School, but it seems to me that this practice runs a two-fold risk: having a significant number of our Catholic children leave a catechetical program for a lengthy time between the reception of a prior Sacrament (e.g., First Communion) and Confirmation preparation; and the Sacrament of Confirmation being reduced to, in effect, a sign of faithful perseverance on the part of those who are confirmed (as opposed to its fuller reality as Sign and Seal of the Holy Spirit who aids and assists in that perseverance). (As I often insist, we must not forget that the Sacraments "Give Grace!")

After discussion with the Diocesan Commission on Catechesis, the Director of Religious Education, School Principals and the Diocesan Superintendent of Schools and the Presbyteral Council the consensus was reached that setting the 7th Grade as the norm was preferable. While some preferred to retain the High School connection, it was recognized that many did not stay in the catechetical program, despite the desire for Confirmation, and that a time prior to Grade School Graduation was acceptable.

Thus, the normative age of those confirmed is to be the 7th Grade. If Confirmation is not held in the Parish every year then every effort should be exerted to assure that all children are confirmed prior to their Grade School (Middle School) Graduation. This is consistent with what we have been encouraging for the past two years. Regardless of whether the Sacrament is celebrated annually or bi-annually in the Parish, the previously recommended age of 16 is abrogated and is now specified as 7th Grade. One of the reasons for specifying 7th grade is to avoid any semblance of "Graduation" from Religious Education (which might be the case with an 8th grade experience of the Sacrament).

I have also proposed an outline for Catechetical steps to be taken in those, all too frequent occasions, of non-catechized children being brought forward for Sacraments. These are Guidelines intended to provide you with a framework within which to provide consistent catechetical endeavors for those who come to you with a desire for Sacraments but little understanding of the fullness of the Faith. The proposed Pathways concern the children only and Pastors are reminded of the duty to provide appropriate adult catechesis for those who seem to have only an occasional relationship with the Church. The length of time being recommended for catechesis tries to keep in mind the need to provide ample opportunity to catechize the parents as well.



PATHWAYS TO CONFIRMATION:

Ordinary Pathway: Children regularly registered in Religious Education (School, CCD, etc.)

Infant Baptism: Early childhood family religious instruction and Catechesis

First Penance / First Holy Communion in 2nd Grade

Ongoing regular Catechesis

Confirmation in 7th Grade - Ongoing regular Catechesis

Extra-Ordinary Paths: Children randomly registered in Religious Education

A - Infant Baptism: Little, if any, early childhood family religious instruction or Catechesis but approach to the Church when child is in 1st to 3rd Grade

Intensive Catechesis - First Penance / First Holy Communion in 2nd Grade or 3rd Grade

Ongoing regular Catechesis

Confirmation in 7th Grade - Ongoing regular Catechesis

B - Infant Baptism: Little, if any, early childhood family religious instruction or Catechesis but approach to the Church when child is in 4th to 8th Grade

Intensive Catechesis - First Penance 5th / 8th Grade

Ongoing regular Catechesis

Confirmation and Holy Eucharist (at time of Confirmation) in 7th Grade (or later for older child)

Ongoing regular Catechesis

C - Non-Baptized Child: Little, if any, early childhood family religious instruction or Catechesis but approach to the Church when child is in 1st to 3rd Grade

Intensive Catechesis - Baptism

Ongoing regular Catechesis

First Penance / First Holy Communion in 2nd Grade or 3rd Grade

Ongoing regular Catechesis

Confirmation in 7th Grade - Ongoing regular Catechesis

D - Non-Baptized Child: Little, if any, early childhood family religious instruction or Catechesis but approach to the Church when child is in 4th to 6th Grade

Intensive Catechesis - Baptism in 4th to 6th Grade

Ongoing regular Catechesis

First Penance 5th / 6th Grade

Ongoing regular Catechesis

Confirmation and Holy Eucharist (at time of Confirmation) in 7th Grade

Ongoing regular Catechesis

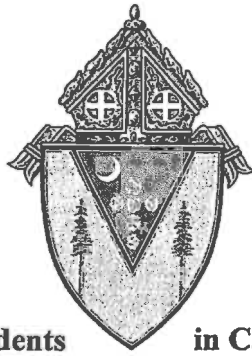
E - Non-Baptized Child: Little, if any, early childhood family religious instruction or Catechesis but approach to the Church when child is in 7th to 12th Grade

Intensive Catechesis - Baptism and Confirmation as RCIC (possibly Eucharist)

Ongoing regular Catechesis

First Penance / Eucharist as soon after Confirmation as feasible (if not done with Confirmation)

Ongoing regular Catechesis



Sacrament of Confirmation for Students in Catholic Parochial Elementary Schools of the Diocese of Santa Rosa

The Sacrament of Confirmation is an outward sign of God's grace, given to a person and enabling him/her to witness to faith in our Lord Jesus, as he is preached and known in the Catholic Church.

The Sacrament of Confirmation is intimately connected to Baptism and the Eucharist. These three Sacraments constitute the "Sacraments of Initiation." The order of reception of these Sacraments—Baptism then Confirmation then Eucharist -- is important inasmuch as this order demonstrates both the unfolding and the unity of the paschal mystery begun by Christ.

The fact that reception of Confirmation is not temporally linked to the other two Sacraments of Initiation leads to much discussion about the appropriate age for reception of this Sacrament. Some of these ideas are erroneous because they focus excessively on our efforts and not on God coming to meet us and working in us. These erroneous ideas also posit the need for an appropriate level of psycho-social maturation for the Sacrament to be effective. Granted, our thoughts and efforts are important, but God's grace is always first. A viable answer to the question 'what age for Confirmation' will elude us if we fail to keep God's action uppermost in our minds. His action is not constrained.

The diocesan policy of restricting the Sacrament of Confirmation to persons who have reached the age of 16 is relinquished, in favor of an earlier experience of this Sacrament.

The opportunity for a believer to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation is to be made available by the 7th grade.

The normative understanding in our parochial elementary schools concerning access to this Sacrament is given in the following points:

- Given a presumption that candidates for Confirmation have received the Sacraments of Baptism and First Confession and First Communion by the end of the second grade, candidates for Confirmation experience this Sacrament in the Church near the end of the seventh-grade¹;
- The catechetical curriculum that directly bears on reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation is to be found in the *Faith and Life* Religion series, commencing in grade 4 and culminating in grade 7.² This catechesis may be supplemented by use of matter from other sources, per approval of the pastor. The *as it were* 'concentrated curriculum' for this Sacrament is in the seventh grade.

¹ There are some students who are not embraced in this presumption (e.g., they have not yet been baptized or they have been baptized and are beyond second grade yet have not received first Confession or first Communion) and for whom Sacraments are a desirable experience. Every effort is made to provide each of these students with a pathway to the Sacraments that conforms to the order of the Sacraments of Initiation.

² Within the *Faith and Life* Religion Textbook Series, explicit references bearing on a preparation of candidates for the Sacrament of Confirmation are to be found as follows:

- Grade 4 Ch. 26: The Holy Spirit
- Grade 5 Ch. 23: The Giver of Life
- Grade 7 Ch. 19: The Sacrament of Confirmation
. . . . Ch. 20: The Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

DIOCESE OF SANTA ROSA
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CONFIRMATION

INTRODUCTION

Confirmation, for those baptized prior to the age of discretion (that is, the completion of the 7th year) completes the Sacraments of Initiation into full membership in the Catholic Church. It seals the presence of the Living Spirit of God already present within the baptized. Confirmation conforms believers more perfectly to Christ and strengthens them so that they may bear witness to Him for the building up of his body in faith and love. (Rite #2 and CCC #1316)

This policy regarding the Sacrament of Confirmation in the Diocese of Santa Rosa is in conformity with the Catechism of the Catholic Church, The Code of Canon Law, and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Decree of Promulgation concerning the Age of Confirmation.

1. Discernment

- A. Preparation for discernment can be done in a variety of settings.
- B. The minimum age for enrollment in the Confirmation process is the 6th or 7th year of grade school with exceptions made for pastoral reasons. It is the desire of the Bishop that all be confirmed prior to completing 9th or 10th grade.
- C. The final phase of preparation is formal candidacy. Discernment of readiness for formal candidacy is demonstrated by:
 - i. Personal Faith Life which shows itself in a personal prayer life and an understanding of the Gospel of Christ and the teachings of the Church in an age-appropriate manner.
 - ii. Community Life which shows itself by a regular attendance at Sunday Eucharistic Liturgy and participation in parish life.
- D. Discernment of readiness for formal candidacy is determined by individual interviews with each prospective candidate. Interviewers are the members of the Confirmation team, the pastor, and/or members of the pastoral staff. It is not sufficient to accept for formal candidacy the entire confirmation class without individual discernment.

2. Formal Candidacy

- A. The process, including discernment and formal candidacy:
 - i. is to be age-appropriate
 - ii. should be at least one school year in length
 - iii. will include Diocesan-approved content
 - iv. is to be parish-based

B. All sponsors must have received the Sacrament of Confirmation and be practicing Catholics who have completed the 16th year and are able, by word and example, to encourage, support, and model Catholic Christian living (Canons 892, 893, 874).

C. A baptismal godparent is desired as the Confirmation sponsor, so as to emphasize the relationship between Baptism and Confirmation (Canon 892, #2). In those cases where the godparent no longer has a close relationship with the candidate, it is appropriate for the candidate to choose a different sponsor. Parents of the candidate are not to be sponsors. A parent may "present" the child for Confirmation with another qualified person being the sponsor (Canon 893 with reference to Canon 874, #5).

3. Celebration

A. The Celebration of Confirmation is at a point in the life of a Catholic when one is able to proclaim in word and deed the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the teachings of the Catholic Church in an age-appropriate manner.

B. Confirmation is publicly and liturgically celebrated by the parish community, preferably during mass.

4. Special Circumstances

A. Unbaptized persons who have reached the age of discretion but have not yet reached adulthood enter into an RCIA process adapted for Children and complete the Sacraments of Initiation at the Easter Vigil or during the Easter Season.

B. Persons with Special Needs should also be prepared for Confirmation and may need pastoral adaptations to make their preparation appropriate to their situation.

C. Persons seeking to be prepared for Confirmation in a parish other than their own are to obtain permission of both pastors.

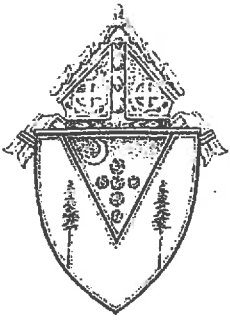
5. Confirmation for Adults

Adults, those over the age of 18, seeking Confirmation should participate in an age-appropriate process for discernment and formal candidacy. The process, including discernment and formal candidacy, is to be at least one school year in length and will include Diocesan-approved content. The time period for preparation may be shortened for pastoral reasons. These adults may be confirmed with the youth of the parish on the occasion of the Bishops visit. Pastors may also request a special faculty to Confirm these adults if this seems desirable.

Conclusion

This policy is to be followed in accordance with the Diocesan Guidelines for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Approved July 1, 2002/revised 2011



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SPONSORS

1. The Rite directs as the ordinary practice, that there be individual sponsors for those being confirmed (Rite of Confirmation, #5), a direction that is reemphasized in the Code of Canon Law (Canon 892).
2. Pastors must ascertain the spiritual qualifications of sponsors. The sponsor for any candidate may be male or female, and is to be a sufficiently mature, practicing* Catholic, who has himself/herself been confirmed and has not been prohibited by law from exercising the role of sponsor. A baptismal sponsor is not only allowed, but is, in fact, desired as the Confirmation sponsor, so as to emphasize the relationship between Baptism and Confirmation (Canon 892, #2). A parent may not act as a sponsor for his or her child, but may "present" the child for Confirmation with another qualified person being the sponsor (Canon 893 with reference to Canon 874, #5). The feasibility of such a practice will depend on local circumstances, number of candidates, etc., and be a pastoral decision.
3. Experience with individual sponsors shows that occasionally some are absent. It would be wise, then, to have a couple of potential sponsors standing in readiness as the Sacrament is being conferred.

** Canon Law Canon 874: "lives a life in harmony with the faith" i.e. married in the Church.

THE CEREMONY OF CONFIRMATION

1. The Bishop will offer Mass. Concelebrants are welcome. If necessary a number of priests should be on hand to assist in the distribution of Holy Communion.
2. It is fitting that priests be invited to concelebrate who have a pastoral role with the Confirmands, e.g., the Pastor, Associate Pastor or Catechetical Instructor of one or all the candidates. In this connection it is important to keep in mind, that the concelebrant is necessarily restricted in his activity, a priest should not concelebrate if he must be the Master of Ceremonies, song leader, or general director of the celebration
3. During Lent and the Easter season the readings for Saturday evening

and Sunday Masses must be readings for the Season. Weekday evenings can be the readings of the day or special readings for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

4. After the Gospel, the pastor or catechist presents the candidates to the Bishop for Confirmation. A formula such as this may be used: "Bishop, the parish community of St. N. wishes to present to you its young men and women who have been prepared and are ready to receive the fullness of Christian Initiation in the Sacrament of Confirmation. Each candidate has been well instructed and is accompanied by a sponsor. It is my privilege to present them to you at this time." All candidates stand for a brief period; at a signal from the Pastor or the Bishop, they are seated. (Unless the class is extremely small (i.e. less than 10) the Candidates should NOT be called individually.)
5. The Bishop gives the homily. He may do this in dialogue form (Rite of Confirmation, #18).
6. The Bishop leads the renewal of baptismal promises. He will ask the Confirmands to stand. At the conclusion of these promises, the Bishop gives his assent to the Profession of Faith and proclaims the faith of the Church: "This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it in Christ Jesus our Lord? The Confirmands respond, ~Amen~. Afterwards the Bishop will ask the Confirmands to kneel.
7. The Bishop extends his hands over the candidates in prayer. This is the "imposition of hands" and it is not performed by priests who are present unless they are also to anoint. (The Bishop does not expect the candidates for Confirmation to be as numerous as to constitute the "true necessity and special reason" that would warrant the assistance of supplementary ministers to aid with the anointing).
8. The anointing of the candidates is performed by the Bishop standing in a convenient place in front of the altar in the sanctuary. The candidates will approach two by two with their sponsors. The candidates will stand before the Bishop. As soon as one is confirmed, he or she leaves at once without waiting for his or her partner to be confirmed and his or her place is immediately taken by the next candidate in line.
9. The candidate should present to the priest assisting the Bishop, a card containing all necessary information on one side with the Confirmation name in a conspicuous place. The candidates should be encouraged to give their Confirmation (Saint) names out loud to the Bishop prior to the anointing. The priest assisting the Bishop should be prepared to do so in cases where the candidate fails to give his or her name. The name is to be that of a Saint about whom the Candidate should know something..

As the sponsor places his right hand on the shoulder of the candidate, the Bishop anoints the forehead with chrism, saying "N., be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit? The newly confirmed replies, "Amen".

The Bishop says, "Peace be with you." The newly confirmed responds, "And also with you."

10. The rubrics do not specify wiping of the oil in Baptism or Confirmation it is better left on as a visible and more significant sign of the matter and form of the Sacrament. The Bishop's hands are washed after the anointing. For this purpose the following should be provided: a cloth to protect the vestment, lemon (1/4 is sufficient), water and large hand towel.
11. The General Intercessions follow. A lay lector or some of the newly confirmed may read the petitions which are in the ritual (#30) coming to the place for such while the Bishop is washing his hands. The Bishop introduces and concludes the intercessions.
12. The Liturgy of the Eucharist follows. Some of the newly confirmed may bring up the gifts; they may not however, be Eucharistic Ministers.
13. A special blessing or prayer over the people is said at the end of Mass.

MUSIC

1. The celebration of Confirmation is a parish community event in which music plays an integral part. The candidates and the entire congregation should be encouraged to participate. All should have the necessary hymn texts. A leader of song should assist congregational participation.
2. The hymns chosen should focus especially on the Holy Spirit, faith and witness, the Church, Baptism, and Initiation. They may also commemorate any special season or solemnity on which Confirmation is conferred. Time-honored hymns conducive to congregational participation are particularly suitable.
3. Congregational and choral music are preferred to solo singing.
4. Music should contribute to the ceremony without unduly prolonging it.

RECORDS

1. The Confirmation register should include the name of the Bishop, the confirmed, parents, and sponsors, as well as the date and place of the celebration.
2. Notation is also to be made in the baptismal register or sent to the church of baptism. This is the principal reason for the retention of the traditional cards carried by the candidates.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

1. The option-outline for Confirmation is to be returned to the Bishop no later than two weeks before Confirmation. Invitations to Bishop for lunch, dinner or reception are to be included with this form.
2. There is to be an opportunity for candidates, parents, and sponsors to receive the Sacrament of Penance at an opportune time before the day of Confirmation.
3. Five (5)-altar servers should be appointed to assist at the ceremony (cross bearer and two acolytes, mitre bearer and crozier bearer).
4. The Bishop wears his mitre and carries his crozier during the procession into the church. Bishop will give mitre and crozier to the servers when he arrives at the sanctuary.

Bishop will put on mitre for the readings.

Bishop will give his mitre to the servers for the Gospel reading and will receive back the crozier. Following the Gospel the Bishop will retain the crozier during the homily.

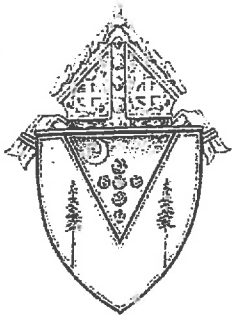
After the homily the Bishop will receive his mitre and crozier from the servers. He will also need one server to hold the Confirmation Rite Book. The Bishop will then begin the renewal of baptismal promises.

For the imposition of hands the Bishop will need the Ritual Book. He will hand the Miter and crozier to the servers. After the Prayer of Imposition of Hands, the servers will hand back the miter and crozier. The Bishop will then begin confirming the candidates.

After the last candidate has been confirmed, the Bishop will return to the side of the altar and hand his crozier to the server, ring to the MC. Bishop will then wash his hands, using the lemon wedges to remove the oil. Once his hands have been washed, he will put back on his ring and give his miter to the server. Bishop then returns to his chair for the prayers of the Faithful.

Mitre and Crozier are returned to the Bishop before the final blessing.

5. In the Processional into the Church, the Bishop enters last followed by two servers who handle his miter and crozier. In the Recessional, the Bishop follows the priests and other ministers of the Mass preceding the newly confirmed and their sponsors.
6. The Bishop encourages each parish to have a reception for the newly confirmed, their families and sponsors after the ceremony. The Bishop will meet with the candidates and their families for pictures at this reception.
7. There should be no speeches made before or after the Communion Prayer. The proper place for any presentation is at the reception following the Liturgy. This also includes any "witness" talks. NO "class" songs are to be sung by the Confirmation Classes.
8. If a group photo is desired this should be done outside if possible. If it is necessary to have the picture in the church:
 - The Altar is NOT to be moved.
 - Proper decorum is to be observed in the Church (relative silence)
 - Excessive time should not be used.



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PARISH INFORMATION SHEET FOR CELEBRATION OF CONFIRMATION

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN TO:

Chancery Office
Attention: Pam Hawkins
P. O. Box 1297
Santa Rosa, CA 95402

Fax Number 566-3310

{Please return TWO weeks prior to your scheduled
Confirmation date }

Parish Name: _____

Confirmation Date: _____ Approx. number of Confirmandi _____

Kyrie – Sung Yes _____ No _____

Gloria – Sung Yes _____ No _____

Liturgy of the Word

First Reading _____

Responsorial Psalm _____

Second Reading _____

Incense before Gospel? Yes _____ No _____

Gospel Reading _____

