

## Adolescent Confirmation

Confirmation is only given once and imprints an indelible spiritual character signifying that Christ has marked the Christian with the seal of the Holy Spirit for the sake of Christian witness and perfecting the common priesthood received in baptism.<sup>25</sup>

### A brief history

In the early Church incorporation into the life of Christ was accomplished through the celebration of the three sacraments of initiation: baptism, confirmation and Eucharist. The unity of these three sacraments is preserved and emphasized when welcoming an adult into the Church. Throughout the long history of the Church various changes and adaptation to the demands of the culture resulted in the practice of infant baptism, but the proper order of the sacraments of initiation was maintained until the twentieth century. In 1910 Pope Pius X was concerned that youth were not nourished by the Eucharist until after they were confirmed in early adolescence. Rather than change the age of confirmation, the order of the sacraments was changed so that children could receive Eucharist at the age of seven, which was determined to be the age of reason.

### Age of Confirmation

In the United States the local Ordinary determines the age at which Confirmation will be conferred in his diocese.<sup>26</sup> “The practice of delaying Confirmation until older adolescence allows the parish to bolster the pastoral care that the Church offers to its youth through community, catechesis and the sacraments.”<sup>27</sup>

**In the Diocese of Fall River the time for the administration of the sacrament of confirmation is in the spring of ninth or any time during the tenth grade. (RD Oct. 2016)**

## Catechesis with Adolescents Preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation

Preparation for the sacrament of confirmation is a unique opportunity in a parish to evangelize adolescent youth who are on the threshold of adulthood. Emphasis should be placed on the need for

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<sup>25</sup> CCC No. 1304-1305

<sup>26</sup> The National Conference of Catholic Bishops, in accord with the prescriptions of CIC 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 CIC 891

<sup>27</sup> *Receive the Gift*, USCCB Publishing, 19

conversion to Jesus Christ and the decision to walk in His footsteps.<sup>28</sup> Catechesis should empower the youth to live as disciples of Jesus Christ, to draw them into responsible participation in the life and mission of the Church, and to foster their personal and spiritual growth.<sup>29</sup>

Preparation for Confirmation is a two-year process that is distinct and separate from any catechetical program in the parish or Catholic school. Sacraments are parish celebrations and while Catholic school communities are important in the daily sharing of faith and values, it is also necessary for young people to stay connected to their parish communities through the celebration of Sunday Eucharist and other parish activities. Catholic school students are to take part in both years of preparation in their parish so that they are included in all retreats, parent meetings, liturgies and service opportunities.

In order to offer the opportunity for youth to grow in discipleship, preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation should include doctrine, worship, community and service.

### **Essential Doctrinal Elements**

- Understand the meaning of confirmation as a sacrament of initiation and its relationship to baptism and Eucharist.
- Understanding of the sacramental life of the Church and the importance of the Eucharist as source and summit of the Catholic faith.
- Familiarity with Scripture as the inspired Word of God and to use the Bible for study and prayer.
- Acceptance of the Ten Commandments and Beatitudes as foundations of the moral teachings of the Catholic Church.
  - Specific instruction on the Church's teaching on human sexuality.
- Promotion of justice and service as a response to the Scriptural principle of the preferential option for the poor and the tenets of the Beatitudes.
- Understanding the elements of the Creed as the Church's profession of faith.
- Emphasis on the need for faith as a human response to God's free offer of grace.
- Awareness that the response to God's offer of grace is a life expressed through prayer and personal and social moral living.
- Vocation
  - Discernment of God's call to the ordained or religious life
  - The vocation of marriage

### **Worship Experiences**

- Weekly participation in the Sunday Eucharist.
- At least one retreat or day of recollection per year.

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<sup>28</sup> General Directory for Catechesis, No. 54

<sup>29</sup> NDC, p.11