

**Diocese of Duluth**

**DIOCESAN POLICY MANUAL– SACRAMENTAL**

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**THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION**

“Baptism, the Eucharist, and the sacrament of Confirmation together constitute the ‘sacraments of Christian initiation,’ whose unity must be safeguarded. It must be explained to the faithful that the reception of the sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace. For ‘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.’”

*Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1285*

“It is evident from its celebration that the effect of the sacrament of Confirmation is the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost.”

*Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1302*

“From this fact, Confirmation brings an increase and deepening of baptismal grace:

- it roots us more deeply in the divine filiation which makes us cry, ‘Abba! Father!’;
- it unites us more firmly to Christ;
- it increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us;
- it renders our bond with the Church more perfect;
- it 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.”

*Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1303*

“Like Baptism which it completes, Confirmation is given only once, for it too imprints on the soul an *indelible spiritual mark*, the ‘character,’ which is the sign that Jesus Christ has marked a Christian with the seal of his Spirit by clothing him with power from on high so that he may be his witness.”

*Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1304*

This giving of the Holy Spirit conforms believers more perfectly to Christ and strengthens them so that they may bear witness to Christ for the building up of his Body in faith and love. They are so marked with the character or seal of the Lord that the sacrament of Confirmation cannot be repeated.

**PART I: THE ROLES OF PARENTS, SPONSORS,  
AND MINISTER OF CONFIRMATION**

**PARENTS**

The initiation of children into the sacramental life is for the most part the responsibility and concern of Christian parents. They are to form and gradually increase a spirit of faith in the children and, with the help of catechetical institutions, prepare them for the fruitful reception of the sacraments of Confirmation and the Eucharist. The role of the parents is also expressed by their active participation in the celebration of the sacraments.

*Rite of Confirmation, 3*

Parents should participate in the sacramental preparation of their children:

- by their own continued growth in the Faith; by frequent and conscious participation in the sacraments, especially Eucharist and Penance; and by prayer
- by ensuring their children's proper spiritual and intellectual formation in the Faith, supported by a home and family life actively embodying that Faith
- by being informed of the criteria of readiness for Confirmation and by participating in the parish catechetical program, in order to assist their children in achieving that readiness
- by participating in parent sessions, consisting of:
  - 1) one session at the beginning of the program (beginning of ninth-grade year)
  - 2) two sessions in the final year of Confirmation preparation.

Parent sessions should include catechesis on the Sacrament of Confirmation and should make clear the preparation requirements expected of the candidates.

**SPONSORS**

As far as possible, there should be a sponsor for each of those to be confirmed.

*Canon 892; Rite of Confirmation, 5*

These sponsors bring the candidates to receive the sacrament, present them to the minister for the anointing, and will later help them to fulfill their baptismal promises faithfully under the influence of the Holy Spirit whom they have received.

*Rite of Confirmation, 5*

It is desirable that the godparent at Baptism also be the sponsor at Confirmation. This expresses more clearly the relationship between Baptism and Confirmation and also makes the function and responsibility of the sponsor more effective.

*Canon 893.2; Rite of Confirmation, 5*

Nonetheless, the choice of a special sponsor for Confirmation is not excluded especially if the Baptismal Sponsor is no longer practicing their Catholic Faith.

It is for the sponsor to see that the confirmed person acts as a true witness to Christ and faithfully fulfills the obligations connected with this sacrament.

*Canon 892*

To be admitted to the role of sponsor, a person must:

1. have completed the sixteenth year and be sufficiently mature for this responsibility;
2. be a Catholic who has been confirmed, has already received first Eucharist and leads a life in harmony with the faith and the role to be undertaken;
3. not be one of the candidate's parents;
4. not be prohibited by canon law from exercising the role of sponsor.

*Canon 893 with reference to Canon 874; Rite of Confirmation, 6*

According to the Introduction to the *Rite of Confirmation* (5), it is within the competency of the Diocesan Bishop to establish the practice regarding the number of sponsors for confirmation. In the Diocese of Duluth, in light of local custom, each confirmation candidate is to name one sponsor. This directive applies both to the liturgical celebration of the sacrament and to the preparation process.

Sponsors should be chosen because they are willing and able to help those to be confirmed to fulfill faithfully their baptismal promises under the influence of the Holy Spirit. It is also desirable that sponsors be chosen early and be involved in the process as much as possible. If members of the same parish or locality, they should be ready to oversee or assist in the adequate formation of the candidates and guide the newly confirmed to an active role in the life and fellowship of the local faith community.

## **THE MINISTER OF CONFIRMATION**

The ordinary minister of Confirmation is the Bishop; a priest who has this faculty by virtue of either the common law or a special concession of competent authority also confers this sacrament validly.

*Canon 882*

The diocesan Bishop is to administer Confirmation personally or see that it is administered by another bishop, but if necessity requires he may give the faculty to administer this sacrament to one or more specified priests.

*Canon 884.1*

When Confirmation is given by a minister who is not a bishop ... it is fitting for him to mention in the homily that the Bishop is the original minister of the sacrament and the reason why priests receive the faculty to confirm.

*Rite of Confirmation, 18*

The Chrism to be used in the Sacrament of Confirmation must be consecrated by a bishop, even if the sacrament is administered by a priest.

*Canon 880.2*

## **PART II: CANDIDATE REQUIREMENTS AND DETERMINATION OF READINESS**

### **BAPTISM AND THE STATE OF GRACE**

“A candidate for Confirmation who has attained the age of reason must profess the faith, be in the state of grace, have the intention of receiving the sacrament, and be prepared to assume the role of disciple and witness to Christ, both within the ecclesial community and in temporal affairs.”

*Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1319*

Proper validation of a candidate’s Baptism is to be provided before the candidate receives the Sacrament of Confirmation.

### **INTENTION OF RECEIVING THE SACRAMENT**

Proper disposition is evidenced by a personal desire to be confirmed expressed in writing to the Bishop at least two weeks prior to the celebration of Confirmation. See the appendix for an outline of this letter.

### **AGE OF CONFIRMATION**

In the United States the conference of bishops has received approval of the Holy See for individual bishops to continue to set the age for Confirmation in their own dioceses.

In the Diocese of Duluth, Confirmation will be conferred on candidates in their junior or senior year of high school who have been suitably instructed and are properly disposed.

### **PREPARATION OF ADOLESCENTS**

**Catechetical:** Catechesis in grades nine through twelve will ensure that candidates have a well-developed understanding of each pillar of the Church (Creed, Sacraments, Commandments, Prayer) and an understanding of their own level of faith development. In this way they can profess as their own the Faith into which they have been baptized and will be confirmed.

See the Diocese of Duluth’s Catechetical Curriculum Standards for the catechetical standards for grades nine through twelve.

Specific catechesis on the Sacrament of Confirmation is to take place in the final year of preparation. It is to consist of at least five sessions or their equivalence, covering the Sacrament of Confirmation. See the Diocese of Duluth’s Catechetical Curriculum Standards for specific catechesis on the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Regular class attendance and respectful participation in class are requirements for Confirmation preparation.

**Liturgical:** Preparation for Confirmation should assist the candidate in developing a life of prayer and participation in the sacraments. Regular active participation in the Sunday Eucharist and reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation are central requirements and help determine a

candidate's readiness for Confirmation. Adequate catechesis is necessary on the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation and on the manner of participation in each of these sacraments.

**Retreat:** During the process of preparing for Confirmation, an overnight retreat or its equivalent is required. An overnight retreat enables the young person to be removed from everyday activities and thus allows him/her to focus fully on the greatness of the Sacrament he/she is preparing to receive. The retreat should be specific to the Sacrament of Confirmation. The Diocese of Duluth provides Confirmation retreats, and each parish is asked to strongly consider participating in these retreats. If you have questions regarding retreats for Confirmation, please contact the Diocesan Pastoral Center.

**Faith in Action:** It is recommended that over a three-year period, candidates for Confirmation spend 15 to 30 hours on projects that help put their faith into action.

Putting faith into action is a way we express our commitment to living out the life of the Spirit of God within us. Whenever a person freely chooses to share himself with others in a way that betters another person's life, Jesus is made more present in our world.

The Confirmation candidate should be given and challenged with opportunities to put his faith into action. These projects should be concrete and should truly express the needs of the parish, neighborhood, and world community. These projects could include anything from a neighborhood project of raking leaves for the elderly, to working on the serving line in a soup kitchen; from helping to usher at Mass, to being part of a mission trip to help a poorer community.

It is important that the candidates understand that these opportunities to put their faith into action are not so much requirements for Confirmation, but are an expression of that love which flows from our baptismal commitment and is essential to the Christian life. For this reason, time should be spent in preparation for these projects and discussing the meaning and implications of these efforts as they proceed. When the project is finished, time should also be spent reflecting on the candidate's experience. It is important to stress that these projects are to assist in forming life-long attitudes of putting faith into action.

## **DETERMINATION OF CANDIDATE READINESS**

It is important for parishes to use a process which will indicate the readiness of individual candidates for Confirmation. This readiness includes the proper interior disposition of a candidate:

- with full knowledge of the Roman Catholic Faith, freely desires to be confirmed in the Faith
- freely accepts the responsibilities of being a Roman Catholic
- understands and personally accepts the Church's teaching on the sacredness of human life  
(see *Evangelium Vitae*)

The Pastor and those he designates from the catechetical staff should take part in this process, seeking to clearly understand the candidate's background, attitudes, faith, knowledge of our Faith, desire to live a life committed to Jesus Christ as a Roman Catholic, and desire to be confirmed. Evaluation of these criteria should be made through an individual interview with each candidate.

Pastors are encouraged to meet with the candidates and include opportunities for celebrating the sacrament of Penance.

If the Pastor determines that for serious reasons the candidate is not ready, then it is desirable to discuss readiness with the confirmand and his/her parents, and if necessary, delay the Sacrament until a later time. Proper care for these individuals includes ongoing formation offered by the parish.

### **CONFIRMATION NAME**

The Rite says nothing about taking a new name at Confirmation.

Therefore, candidates may retain their baptismal name rather than take a new one. This is desirable because it manifests an understanding of the fact that Confirmation “completes the grace of Baptism.”

A special Confirmation name may be taken if desired, however. Since biblical times a new name has marked a great spiritual event in a person’s life. In this case the name should be that of a saint whose life or virtues the candidate wishes to emulate and to whom the candidate can call upon for intercession.

### **CONFIRMATION INSIGNIA**

There are no insignia for Confirmation as the lighted candle and white robe for Baptism.

To emphasize the relationship between Confirmation and Baptism, a white garment or robe might be used at Confirmation, just as a white baptismal robe was used to clothe the newly baptized. Use of a stole, however, is not an option for the following reasons:

The practice in some places of using stoles at Confirmation seems to have arisen out of the laudable desire to provide a symbol signifying the confirmand’s participation in the life and ministry of the Church. However, the distinction between the universal priesthood of all the baptized and the ministerial priesthood of the ordained is blurred when the distinctive garb of the ordained ministers is used in this manner.

### **THE CELEBRATION OF CONFIRMATION**

Celebrations of Confirmation should be developed according to diocesan guidelines and should not be scheduled during Advent and Lent.

Please call the Diocesan Pastoral Center to schedule a date for Confirmation and to receive a packet with specific instructions on the celebration of the Sacrament.

### **RECORD OF CONFERRED CONFIRMATION**

The names of the confirmed with mention of the minister, the parents, the sponsors, and the place and the date of the conferral of Confirmation are to be noted in the Confirmation Register of the parish and sent to the Diocesan Pastoral Center.

*Canon 895*

Confirmation records should be returned to the Diocesan Pastoral Center within 30 days after celebrating the Sacrament.

**Note:** The minister of Confirmation to be recorded is the one who anointed the candidate with chrism on the forehead with the laying on of the hand and the prescribed words.

When Confirmation is celebrated at one parish (HOSTING parish) for confirmandi from several parishes (SENDING parish), the Confirmation is to be recorded in the register of the HOSTING parish where the sacrament is celebrated. The same information can be entered in the SENDING parish confirmation register, with the host parish noted as the place of confirmation.

Notation of the conferral of Confirmation is also to be made in the baptismal register. When Confirmation does not occur in the place of Baptism, the SENDING pastor must inform the place of Baptism about the conferral of Confirmation.

Each parish reports its own confirmandi to the Diocesan Pastoral Center.

## **POST-CONFIRMATION FORMATION**

“Very often ... [the young person], in receiving the sacrament of Confirmation, formally concludes the process of Christian initiation but from that moment virtually abandons completely the practice of the faith. This is a matter of serious concern which requires specific pastoral care, based on the formative resources of the journey of initiation itself.”

*General Directory for Catechesis, 181*

In order to foster a more proper understanding of Confirmation and of one’s responsibilities upon being confirmed, it is necessary that each confirmed person continue his or her formation of faith through:

- \* regular active participation in the sacraments of Eucharist and Penance
- \* commitment to Christian service within the parish and wider community
- \* study of Sacred Scripture and other dimensions of the Church

It is suggested that the parish provide catechesis after Confirmation. This will help combat the tendency to see Confirmation as graduation. See the Diocese of Duluth’s Catechetical Curriculum Standards for suggestions for post-Confirmation catechesis.

The parish community can foster and facilitate the maturing and development of the newly confirmed’s spiritual life by providing opportunities of active involvement in parish liturgies, adult education instruction, and opportunities of service to the parish and wider communities.

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# **APPENDIX**

## **LETTER TO BISHOP SIRBA REQUESTING THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION**

**Do me the honor of telling me about you:**

- Your name
- Your age
- Your family
- What parish are you a member of?
- What you like to do and why?
- One hope you have

**Please write about your relationship with the Trinity, one God in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.**

- How do you describe your relationship with Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity?
- What goals do you have for your life of personal prayer and attendance at Sunday Mass?
- How do you see the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and His seven gifts that you will receive in Confirmation helping you in your life?
- What have you done in Christian service and why? What have you learned about yourself in helping others?
- How will you witness to Jesus Christ and His Church after you receive the Sacrament of Confirmation?
- Tell me about your sponsor. What inspires you about how he/she lives their faith?