



ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS

The Church in Central and Southern Indiana

THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION For Baptized Adolescents



"A Journey of Lifelong Faith Formation"

**PREPARATION GUIDELINES
Archdiocese of Indianapolis**



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PREPARATION GUIDELINES

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A Letter from Archbishop Daniel Buechlein

My Friends in Christ,

The Sacraments of Initiation were instituted by Christ to open for us the way to salvation and to lead us in the life of grace. Additionally, “the Church earnestly desires that all the faithful be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations” (Const. on the Sacred Liturgy, #14). And so, the guidelines contained within this resource will assist you in your work in preparing our young Church for the deeper commitment to a relationship with God that Confirmation encourages.

The Sacrament of Confirmation is so important. We need the grace of this sacrament to support us in carrying out our baptismal vocation not only to live the faith but to witness to it. This is why the Church requires that our youth be confirmed.

Confirmation allows the young Church to advance in their faith, but also it impacts their families and the entire community of believers, the Church. It allows the gifts and service of the confirmandi to contribute to building up the Kingdom of God.

As the Archbishop, I am the “ordinary” minister of Confirmation “so that there will be a more evident relationship to the first pouring forth of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost” (Rite of Confirmation, #7). While the Sacrament is celebrated by the Archbishop and often away from the candidate’s home parish, it is still anchored in the parish community. Some of our communities will be called to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation at Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral, the mother Church of the Archdiocese. The Cathedral is the location of the cathedra, the bishop’s chair, a sign of the teaching authority of the Archbishop and of our unity as Catholics within their local parish communities (usually joined with other parish communities). Wherever the celebration occurs, it unites us with the wider Church through the Archbishop or his delegate.

Parishes in the archdiocese should invite all persons between the ages of 13 and 18 to participate in a process of Confirmation and liturgical preparation. It is during this time in their lives that these young people are being called to take an important step and to advance their faith journey.

Therefore, I want to make a special appeal to parents. At baptism, parents make the promise to guide their children through the sacraments of initiation. Confirmation completes the initiation of our young Catholics and allows them to step forward in faith to witness to the truth and love of God in their lives.

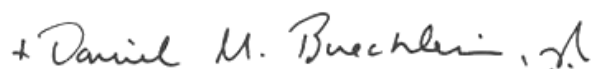
The *National Directory for Catechesis* lays out the model of all catechesis within our Church. That is, all catechesis is rooted in the baptismal catechumenate in which "candidates are given suitable pastoral formation and guidance, aimed at training them in the Christian life" (RCIA, 75).

The preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation and the faith formation that contributes to it is a part of a lifelong journey of growing in the wisdom and knowledge of God.

Even after challenging our youth to participate in a well-organized process of preparation, some might fall short of our expectations. As in all things, we can rely on the grace of the Sacrament to assist us. I encourage you to assist our young people to receive this Sacrament, knowing that God's grace is powerful and effective.

I pray these guidelines will bring clarity to planning and preparation and I remain grateful for your hard work and dedication to our youth. May God bless you for sharing your gifts and bless our youth through you.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Daniel M. Buechlein" followed by a small flourish.

Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein, OSB
Catholic Archdiocese of Indianapolis

THE CONFIRMATION JOURNEY

As stated in the U.S. Catholic Bishop's document, *"Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us,"* ongoing faith formation is essential. The Confirmation Journey is not graduation but an apprenticeship for the entire Christian life. (OHBW, 44)

"The presentation of the Gospel requires the best efforts of the Church at every level and the tireless dedication of the entire community of the faithful. Apostles, prophets, pastors, evangelists and teachers prepare the baptized for the work of the ministry, for building up the Body of Christ, so that the Church reaches unity of faith, knowledge of the Son of God, and mature adulthood in the fullness of Jesus Christ" (*National Directory for Catechesis*, 65).

Where faith is concerned, no journey should be traveled alone. Christ, our Savior, spent his three years of public ministry in the company of ordinary yet special apostles who willingly responded to God's Call for them to share the Good News. The preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation is no different a faith journey, and there are many levels of leaders and guides to help the candidates along the way. What follows are initial "job descriptions" for all those called to share in the responsibility of preparing candidates for this sacrament. This collective effort begins years earlier, in the home, where the parents or guardians of a candidate as primary facilitators of religious education reside. May God be with you on your journey.



SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION TASK FORCE

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The Office of Catholic Education and the Office of Worship and Spiritual Life are grateful to our Task Force for their role in developing and implementing this document.



THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION IN THE CONTEXT OF EVANGELIZATION

***“Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel
to every creature.”***

Mark 16:15

Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. We exist in order to evangelize. The purpose of evangelization is to bring about faith and conversion to Christ. Therefore, the proper role of catechesis is within the Church's mission of evangelization.

Within the Church's mission of evangelization, catechesis promotes and matures initial conversion, educates persons in the faith and incorporates them into the life of the Christian community. Today, catechesis must take the form of the primary proclamation of the Gospel because many who present themselves for catechesis have not yet experienced conversion to Jesus Christ. Some level of conversion is necessary for catechesis to be able to fulfill its proper task of education in the faith. Initiatory catechesis incorporates those preparing for the sacraments of initiation into the Christian community that knows, lives, celebrates and bears witness to the faith.

In seeking to foster the initial faith of the catechumen in the person of Jesus Christ, catechesis leads to a genuine profession of faith. This profession of faith is the goal of catechesis and an inherent element in each of the sacraments of initiation. The aim of catechetical activity is to encourage a living, explicit and fruitful profession of faith (*National Directory for Catechesis*, 66).

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" (*United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, p.203).

A Lifelong Process of Ongoing Faith Formation

We are all called to a lifelong process of ongoing faith formation. In order to grow in our faith, we must continually take advantage of opportunities for study and reflection. Adults, as well as children and young people, will always find that there is more to learn about our faith. The reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation does not mean that any one person has "graduated" in some way.

In preparing for Confirmation, young people begin to gather the tools and gain the capacity to continue their faith journeys for the rest of their lives. Faith formation begins in the context of the domestic church where parents are the primary teachers in Confirmation preparation. All of those who have been confirmed are called by the Church to continue to grow in their faith.

As a Sacrament of Initiation, Confirmation brings those who receive it more deeply into the life of the Church so that they might hear more clearly how God is calling them to grow in faith and to express this faith in service to others.

Baptismal Catechumenate: The Inspiration for All Catechesis

The baptismal catechumenate is the source of inspiration for all catechesis. This process of formation includes all four stages of the RCIA as well as the rituals that mark those stages. In this context, catechesis aims to achieve a more integral formation of the person rather than merely to communicate information. It is a "process of formation and a fruitful blend of instruction and formation in the faith" (NDC, 19.D).

Because the baptismal catechumenate provides a gradual process for new members to be initiated into the life and practice of the Catholic faith, it should be the cornerstone of the parish catechetical plan (NDC, 61.3).

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

the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults provides the norm for catechetical as well as liturgical practice for the sacraments of initiation.

For the purposes of Christian initiation, children who have reached the age of reason are considered adults in a limited sense. As much as possible, their formation in the faith should follow the general pattern of the ordinary catechumenate, making use of the appropriate adaptations permitted in the rite.

HISTORY AND EXPERIENCE OF THE SACRAMENT

The Sacrament of Confirmation has had a long, complex history. Originally, Confirmation was not distinct from Baptism, but in the fourth and fifth centuries, the rites following Baptism came to be particularly associated with the gift of the Holy Spirit. By the fifth century, historical evidence suggests that Roman practice was beginning to separate Baptism and a post-baptismal anointing (an anointing which we still see today in the Rite of Baptism for Children) from a laying on of hands and a second anointing, which were reserved to the bishop. Confirmation arose as a distinct sacrament from this laying on of hands and second anointing. Today, the celebration of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults reemphasizes the connection between Baptism and Confirmation, omitting the post-baptismal anointing with chrism if the newly baptized person will be immediately confirmed (RCIA, 216).

Since the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation came to be separated by some amount of time in a person's life, particularly with the increase historically in the practice of infant Baptism, the ages at which people have been confirmed have varied over the centuries and even within the last several decades. These practical changes and developments in our understanding of the theology of the Sacrament have contributed to current practices in the celebration of the rite. All of these historical developments and theological shifts have contributed to a rich, meaningful Sacrament.

It is important to be sensitive to the memories and experiences of older Catholics while implementing and promoting the preparation processes for their children. The success of catechesis for Confirmation is dependent upon a partnership between parents and parish.

Confirmation: Not Graduation from Studying Religion

Young people and adults sometimes think that Confirmation marks the end of their faith formation. Putting this sacrament in a proper context and perspective helps to put this misconception to rest.

Remote Preparation

With sacraments, it is helpful to speak in terms of remote, proximate (getting closer) and immediate preparation. Our preparation to celebrate sacraments often proceeds along these lines.

The regular catechesis that a young person receives from an early age can be thought of as remote preparation for Confirmation (and other sacraments!). Our archdiocesan religion curriculum provides an excellent overview of the Faith in an age-appropriate way throughout the primary and intermediate grades.

Proximate Preparation

In Middle School a young person's capacity to grasp and live our Catholic faith deepens—while the truths of our faith are being revisited and expanded regularly via the archdiocesan curriculum. Hence a readiness to celebrate the sacrament of Confirmation often appears around this time, and should be encouraged!

Immediate Preparation

Only in the weeks leading up to celebrating this sacrament does a sharper focus on Confirmation become appropriate. The reason we come to catechesis during the year of our Confirmation is not just to get ready for the sacrament. We need catechesis every year of our life. Some years we receive additional catechesis as immediate preparation for a sacrament.

READINESS TO RECEIVE THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

Every baptized person not yet confirmed can and should receive the sacrament of Confirmation. Since Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist form a unity, it follows that "the faithful are obliged to receive this sacrament at the appropriate time" for without Confirmation and Eucharist, Baptism is certainly valid and efficacious, but Christian initiation remains incomplete (CCC, 1306–1308).

Preparation for Confirmation should aim at leading the Christian toward a more intimate union with Christ and a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit in order to be more capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities of Christian life. To this end catechesis 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.

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. St. Thomas reminds us of this, "Age of body does not determine age of soul" (*STh III,72,8, ad 2; Cf. Wis 4:8*).

Young people between the age of discretion through around sixteen years are to be intentionally directed to instructional experiences for Confirmation, but must be allowed to make their own decision as to whether or not they will receive the sacrament after such a period of instruction (NDC, 36A).

The question of whether a young person should be forced to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation can be difficult for some families.

Parents, recognizing their responsibility to train their children in the faith, sometimes push their children to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. When parents require their children to go through a Confirmation preparation process, they are being faithful to the promises they made when their children were baptized. Yet after a young person completes this preparation, he or she must be allowed to freely choose to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.

The process of preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation should enable a young person to make this choice and inspire them to choose to be confirmed. When a young person chooses to delay the reception

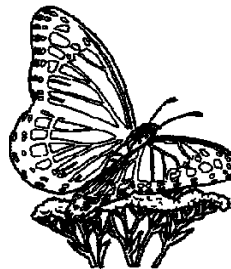
of the Sacrament, the Church has an obligation to minister to the spiritual needs that arise within the domestic church at that time.

As we invite young people to prepare to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, we must encourage them to develop their relationship with Jesus Christ so that they can move from a place of inherited faith to a place of established, personal faith. Efforts should be made to "...encourage parents to ensure that their children receive formal catechetical instruction in programs sponsored by the parish (NDC, 54C – *Parents and Families*).

"From the time of the apostles, becoming a Christian has been accomplished by a journey and initiation in several stages," so as we invite young people to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, we must help them recognize and accept the responsibility of fully belonging to, and supporting, the Catholic Church (*United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, p.188*). It is through this understanding that young people will be "...empowered to help transform the world by living as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today" (*Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry, Goal 1*).

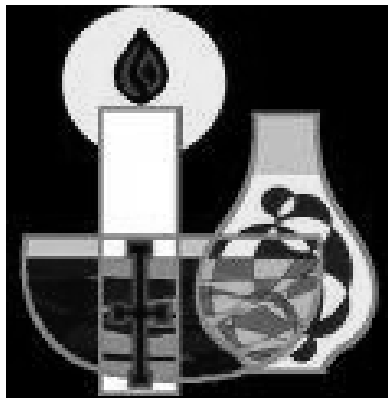
To receive Confirmation one must be in a state of grace. One should receive the Sacrament of Penance in order to be cleansed for the gift of the Holy Spirit. More intense prayer should prepare one to receive the strength and graces of the Holy Spirit with docility and readiness to act (*United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, p.242*).

Determination of readiness is made by the pastor/parish life coordinator in consultation with the candidate, parent(s), educational administrators and catechists.



A candidate for the Sacrament of Confirmation is moving toward:

- + A desire for intimate union with Christ
- + A response to Jesus' mysterious mercy and forgiveness
- + An acceptance of our goodness as God's beloved creation
- + A conscious and faithful response to the actions and gifts of the Holy Spirit
- + A sense of belonging to the universal Church and the parish community
- + Experiencing significant relationships with persons of faith
- + A conscious awareness of personal spirituality
- + A disposition to be educated in the faith and Christian way of life
- + A deeper relationship with their parish community



AGE OF CONFIRMATION

Episcopal Conferences may designate the appropriate age for Confirmation. In the United States the age of Confirmation in the Latin Church for children and young adults varies from the age of discretion (7) through age sixteen (16).

In the Archdiocese of Indianapolis

Each parish or cluster of parishes in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis will at regular intervals invite all persons between the ages of 13 and 18 to participate in a process of Confirmation catechesis and liturgical celebration.

Sacramental and Liturgical Policies 9540.3
Archdiocese of Indianapolis

Christian Initiation of Children Who Have Reached Catechetical Age

The initiation process outlined in the RCIA (252-330) is to be used for unbaptized children who have attained the age of reason and are of catechetical age. Normally this is the age of seven. As a norm, they are to celebrate the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist at the same liturgy.

The process of initiation of children who have not been baptized as infants must be adapted to their ability to grow in faith and their capacity to understand the faith. Their initiation should proceed through the same steps as for the initiation of adults. While the process may take several years before they receive the sacraments, "their condition and status as catechumens should not be compromised or confused, nor should they receive the sacraments of initiation in any sequence other than that determined in the ritual of Christian initiation" (RCIA, Appendix III, 19, NDC, 36).

If the children are determined to be ready to receive the sacraments, the final period of preparation should proceed, if possible, during the season of Lent; the final step, the celebration of the sacraments of initiation should normally take place at the Easter Vigil, (RCIA, Part II, 256).

CATECHETICAL COMPONENTS

"Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit; for it had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit"

Acts 8:14-17

In Brief

Confirmation perfects Baptismal grace; it is the sacrament which enhances 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.

Confirmation, like Baptism, imprints a spiritual mark or indelible character on the Christian's soul; for this reason one can receive this sacrament only once in one's life. The essential rite of Confirmation is anointing the forehead of the baptized with sacred chrism together with the laying on of the minister's hand and the words: "Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit" (*United States Catechism for Adults, p.205*).

Pentecost and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit

The seven *gifts* of the Holy Spirit are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. They belong in their fullness to Christ, Son of David. They complete and perfect the virtues of those who receive them. They make the faithful docile in readily obeying divine inspirations.

Choosing a Confirmation Name

A candidate may choose a Confirmation name or retain a recognized saint's name given at Baptism. In either case it is important to have a saint's name as part of the Confirmation rite. A Confirmation name is

a permanent reminder which links the candidate with the way in which the mission of Jesus lives on in those special persons recognized by the Church as saints or heroic people in its history. The process of researching the life of a saint or non-canonized role model can be an enriching part of the preparation program and can serve as the basis for reflection on the qualities of a present day witness for Christ. Family members and sponsors can assist the candidate in choosing a Confirmation name.

Choosing A Sponsor

Candidates and their families should be given the following information before being asked to choose a Confirmation sponsor.

Requirements of Canon Law

Canon 893 #1 states that Confirmation sponsors should meet the requirements of baptismal sponsors as stated in Canon 874. Therefore, a sponsor:

- + must be at least sixteen years old, unless another age is set by the bishop of the diocese or an exception, for just reason, is made by the pastor
- + must be a Catholic who has received all three sacraments of initiation and leads a life in harmony with the Catholic faith
- + must not be bound by any penalty of the Church
- + must not be the parent of the person to be confirmed (A parent may, however, for good reason, serve as presenter of the candidate for the Sacrament of Confirmation)

It is desirable that the one who undertook the role of sponsor at baptism be sponsor for Confirmation. Distance and other factors may preclude this recommendation, (Canon 893). While Canon Law provides the basic requirements, the path to a meaningful sponsor-candidate relationship involves several other factors. A sponsor should:

- + be a person of lived faith and a role model for the candidate
- + be available to spend time with the candidate during the preparation process and to take part in the celebration of the sacrament
- + be a person with whom the candidate has a comfortable and ongoing relationship

General Guidelines

Dioceses and parishes should present sacramental catechesis that:

- + Is a comprehensive and systematic formation in the faith, one that integrates knowledge of faith with living the faith
- + Is fundamentally Trinitarian and centers on initiation into the life of the Triune God
- + Presents Christian life as a lifelong journey to the Father in the Son and through the Holy Spirit
- + Is appropriate to the age level, maturity, and circumstances of those being catechized
- + Is intended for all members of the Christian community, takes place within the community, and involves the whole community of faith
- + Involves parents in the preparation of their children for the sacraments
- + Is integrated into a comprehensive catechetical program
- + Focuses primarily on the symbols, rituals, and prayers contained in the rite for each sacrament
- + Enables the believer to reflect on the meaning of the sacrament received by implementing a thorough experience of *mytagogia* following the celebration

“Catechesis is a comprehensive and systematic formation in the faith” (NDC 67).

THE TASKS OF CATECHESIS

Promoting Knowledge of the Faith

The Candidate will understand:

- + The Holy Spirit as the Third Person of the Trinity
- + The Sacrament of Baptism where we first receive the Spirit
- + The role of the Holy Spirit in our lives and within the Church
- + The sealing with the Holy Spirit in Confirmation
- + The gifts and fruits of the Spirit and how we are called to be witnesses and disciples

Promoting Participation in Liturgy and Sacraments

The Candidate will:

- + Understand the symbols used in the Sacrament of Confirmation
- + Be familiar with the use of scripture readings about the Spirit
- + Appreciate the Liturgy of the Word as a time when God speaks to us
- + Explore the meaning of ritual action including a renewal of Baptismal promises
- + Reflect on the experience of the meaning of being anointed with chrism at Confirmation

Integrating Moral Formation and Life

Candidates will be encouraged to:

- + Reflect on the lives and witnesses of faith
- + Explain conversion and what it means to evangelize
- + Examine the Sermon on the Mount and other scriptural sources for living a life of love
- + Explain the role of the Holy Spirit in forgiveness and reconciliation
- + Reflect on the central values of Jesus' message and mission and vision of the Reign of God
- + Reflect on how to take action to counter the effects of personal and cultural sin

Teaching to Pray

Candidates will be given an opportunity to:

- + Pray individually and in community
- + Understand the central importance of prayer in the life of Christians
- + Discuss the importance of spending time with God
- + Establish daily prayer practices
- + Be introduced to *Lectio Divina* as a form of prayer
- + Experience reflection time on the formation they have received

Initiation into the life of the Church

Candidates will explore:

- + The role of the community in faith development
- + The Church as a community of people who profess faith in the risen Jesus and his message and who, through the power of the Spirit, live in loving service to all people
- + The need within the Church for a process of initiating new members
- + The process of Christian initiation and the integrated nature of the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist

Promoting Missionary Spirit

Candidates will:

- + Integrate Catholic social principles into daily life
- + Be guided and nurtured by parents and catechists into a vision of lifelong service following the example of Christ
- + Be encouraged to serve as part of the preparation experience as it is a visible sign of lifelong faith
- + Serve in ways meaningful to them, enabling them to use their talents and abilities

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Archbishop and Staff

As the visible source and foundation of unity of the local church, the Archbishop is the ordinary minister of the Sacrament of Confirmation. While catechesis is the responsibility of the entire Christian community, the proclamation and transmission of the Gospel is central to the Episcopal ministry. The Archbishop is chief catechist and has primary responsibility for catechesis in the diocese. The Archbishop ensures that the ministry of catechesis receives the support of competent personnel, effective means and adequate financial resources. He is to ensure "that catechists are adequately prepared for their task, being well-instructed in the doctrine of the Church and possessing both a practical and theoretical knowledge of the laws of psychology and of educational method" (*Catechesi Tradendae*, 63).

The Archbishop also makes sure that the texts and other instruments of catechesis and textbook series used must be found on the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' list of Textbooks in Conformity. Updated lists are provided through the Archdiocesan Office of Catholic Education or found on the USCCB website:

www.usccb.org/catechism/document/Currentlist.pdf.

Pastors

Pastors have specific responsibilities that derive from their particular catechetical role. "All believers have a right to catechesis; all pastors have a duty to provide it" (*Catechesi Tradendae*, 64). Pastors are responsible for ensuring that the goals of the diocesan catechetical mission are achieved.

Pastors see to it that:

1. A suitable catechesis is imparted for the celebration of the sacraments
2. Through catechetical instruction imparted for an appropriate period of time children and youth are prepared properly for the sacraments
3. Having received the Sacraments of Initiation these youth are enriched more fully and deeply through catechetical formation

4. Specialized catechesis is provided for those persons with disabilities and integrated with regular catechetical activities in the parish (NDC, 49). Our Special Religious Education (SPRED) program can assist.

The pastor should also ensure that:

- + Catechesis is emphasized in a way that provides age-appropriate opportunities for adults, youth and children
- + A total parish plan for catechesis is developed and implemented in consultation with the parish pastoral council and parish catechetical leadership
- + Catechesis for adults of all ages is a priority
- + Catechesis for youth and young adults is situated within a comprehensive plan for youth ministry in the parish
- + Catechists at all levels are well formed and trained for this task
- + Catechesis is available for all language groups
- + The baptismal catechumenate is a vital component in the organization of catechesis in the parish
- + The catechumenate is an essential process in the parish, one that serves as the inspiration of all catechesis

Parents and Guardians

Parents are the most influential agents of catechesis for their children, (*United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, p.376*). They have a unique responsibility for the education of their children and as “first educators” they catechize primarily by the witness of their Christian lives and by their love for the faith, (NDC, 54). The family is the child’s first experience of a faith community and deserves careful attention in all catechetical endeavors. Throughout the period of initiation of children of catechetical age, the parents of the children should be encouraged to be involved.

When children are baptized, parents accept the responsibility to bring up their children in the practice of the faith and to see to it that the divine life that God gives them is kept safe from the poison of sin, to grow always stronger in their hearts, (*Catechesi Tradendae, 56*). At the same time, the Church promises to help parents foster their children’s faith and assists them specifically in their role as catechists of their children, whether they assume full responsibility themselves or look to the parish school or religious education program for help and support.

Catechists

The apostolic work of the catechist springs from the Sacrament of Baptism through which all believers come to share in the prophetic ministry of Christ and the evangelizing mission of the Church. It is strengthened by the Sacrament of Confirmation. The call to the ministry of catechist is a vocation, an interior call, the voice of the Holy Spirit. Catechists need to be practicing Catholics who participate fully in the communal worship and the life of the Church and who have been prepared for their apostolate by appropriate catechetical training. Their commissioning by the Church is a participation in the divine calling to teach as Jesus did. Their personal relationship with Jesus Christ energizes their service to the Church and provides the continuing motivation, vitality, and force of their catechetical activity. Christ invites all catechists to follow him as a teacher of the faith and a witness to the truth of faith, (NDC, 55).

Sponsors and Godparents

Candidates for Confirmation, as for Baptism, fittingly seek the spiritual help of a *sponsor*. To emphasize the unity of the two sacraments, it is appropriate that this be one of the baptismal godparents, (*United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, p.206*).

“The regular meetings with my sponsor in the Confirmation formation process were memorable and productive. They allowed me to connect my life as a teenager to my faith through a good relationship.”

Youth Minister
Archdiocese of Indianapolis

Community

- + The faith community or parish family welcomes the candidates and provides them with prayerful support during the preparation program
- + The community prays with and for the candidates and all others involved in the Confirmation program
- + The community provides hospitality and celebrates with the newly confirmed
- + The community affirms the newly confirmed as fully initiated Catholics and calls them to active participation in the life of the parish

Candidates

Candidates should display an openness of heart through:

- + Mass attendance
- + Consistent attendance at formation sessions
- + Participation in a retreat or day of reflection - ideally focused on Confirmation preparation
- + Willingness to participate in community service

Candidates must provide a copy of their Baptismal certificate. The full address of the parish of Baptism must be attached to this certificate.





MYSTAGOGY: A LIFELONG PROCESS

The Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, are the rites by which we become members of the Body of Christ taking our place in full communion with the Church. Candidates, when preparing for the sacraments, spend time in prayer and study. Yet, it is in embracing the lifelong journey into conversion that we truly become faithful disciples of Jesus.

Mystagogy is what the Church refers to when we are challenged to continuously “grow in deepening our grasp of the paschal mystery and in making it a part of our lives through meditation on the Gospel, sharing in the Eucharist, and doing the works of charity” (Rite of Christian Initiation, 244). It is a lifelong introduction into a fuller and more effective understanding of mysteries through the Gospel message we have learned and above all through our experience of the sacraments we have received. As we grow and mature, we are called to “derive a new perception of the faith, of the Church, and of the world” (*Rite of Christian Initiation, 245*).

Evidence of this will be witnessed in:

- + On-going education and formation for their family
- + Participating fully, actively, and consciously in the Mass
- + Participation in the life and ministry of their parish community
- + Participation in the Sacrament of Reconciliation

This gradual living through the mystery of God’s love for us and discerning and committing ourselves to our role in the salvation story is something that comes to pass as we mature in Christ. This is the *mystagogy* of our lives. It is important to acknowledge and articulate that reception of the Sacraments of Initiation is not the end of our formation as Christians. It is but the beginning.

It is crucial that parishes continually offer opportunities for ongoing education and formation for all ages and stages of life to help the initiated come to a fuller understanding and appreciation of the gifts they have received.

THE PRECEPTS OF THE CHURCH

The Precepts of the Church are set in the context of a moral life bound to and nourished by liturgical life. The obligatory character of these positive laws decreed by the pastoral authorities is meant to encourage on the part of the faithful the indispensable foundations for their lives as Catholics:

The first precept ("You shall attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation.") requires the faithful to participate in the Eucharistic celebration when the Christian community gathers together on the day commemorating the Resurrection of the Lord.

The second precept ("You shall confess your sins at least once a year.") ensures preparation for the Eucharist by the reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, which continues Baptism's work of conversion and forgiveness.

The third precept ("You shall humbly receive your Creator in Holy Communion at least during the Easter season.") guarantees as a minimum the reception of the Lord's Body and Blood in connection with the Paschal feasts, the origin and center of the Christian liturgy.

The fourth precept ("You shall keep holy the holy days of obligation.") completes the Sunday observance by participation in the principal liturgical feasts which honor the mysteries of the Lord, the Virgin Mary, and the saints.

The fifth precept ("You shall observe the prescribed days of fasting and abstinence.") ensures the times of fasting and penance which prepare us for the liturgical feasts; they help us acquire mastery over our instincts and freedom of heart.

The sixth precept is that the faithful also have the duty of providing for the material needs of the Church, each according to his abilities (*United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, p.334*).

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