
Policy of the Diocese of San José Preparation for the Sacraments of Initiation

CONFIRMATION

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. These guidelines apply to baptized adults and children who have reached the age of reason.
- B. All unbaptized children who have reached the age of reason and unbaptized adults are to be prepared and receive all three sacraments of initiation according to the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*.¹ Pastors are not free to defer Confirmation “until the Bishop comes” or for other reasons.² (See Section IX for further clarification on Catholics belonging to any of the Eastern Rites.).
- C. In order to insure orderly and progressive catechesis, every parish should establish a norm (age or grade level) for admission to the immediate preparation for Confirmation.³ Once a norm is established in a parish, permission must be granted by the Bishop to change the age or grade level. Parishes wishing to restore the sequence of the sacraments of initiation must request permission from the Bishop.
- D. It is imperative that high schools in the Diocese who offer Confirmation preparation seek permission of the students’ pastors to celebrate Confirmation.
- E. Realistic provision must be made for persons with disabilities to celebrate the sacrament of Confirmation and to participate in the preparation for the sacrament according to this policy, insofar as they are able (cf. *Reception of Sacraments for People with Disabilities*). For specific guidelines see: *For the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities*, NCCB 1995.

¹ RCIA #305. “At the third step of their Christian initiation, the children will receive the sacrament of baptism, the bishop or priest who baptizes them will also confer confirmation, and the children will for the first time participate in the liturgy of the eucharist.”

² CCL # 866 – Unless a grave reason prevents it, an adult who is baptized is to be confirmed immediately after baptism and participate in the celebration of the Eucharist, also receiving Communion.

³ *Decree of Promulgation August 21, 2001*: The National Conference of Catholic Bishops, in accord 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.

- F. This policy is based on the official 1971 *Rite of Confirmation, Introduction and Notes*, the relevant sections of the *Sacramentary, Lectionary, Code of Canon Law* 1983, the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, the *General Directory for Catechesis, National Directory for Catechesis*, and *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. All norms in this policy are to be interpreted in light of these sources.

II. PREREQUISITES FOR CANDIDACY

Those who request the sacrament of Confirmation:

- A. Must provide a copy of their baptismal certificate. Baptismal certificates of adults must have been issued within the last six months.
- B. Must have attained the use of reason.⁴
- C. Must have heard the proclamation of God's love, mercy and forgiveness in the midst of the community and have the desire to respond to Christ through an on-going life conversion.
- D. Are expected to participate in the weekly Sunday liturgy.
- E. Must be participating in a program of systematic catechesis either in the parish, the Catholic school or the home.
- F. Must have a basic understanding of the Bible, the Creed, the sacraments, the Christian life and prayer.
- G. Must be able to renew their baptismal promises and have no impediments to participating in the Eucharist such as being in the state of mortal sin or not married in the Church.
- H. Must choose a sponsor who will accompany the candidate.
 1. Sponsors must:
 - be chosen by the candidate (or, if necessary, by parent, guardian or pastor);
 - have completed the sixteenth year unless the pastor or minister has a just cause for an exception;
 - be a fully initiated (all three sacraments) practicing Catholic who participates in Sunday liturgy, leads a life in harmony with the faith and

⁴ CCL #97.2. Before the completion of the seventh year a minor is called an infant and is to be held incompetent (non sui compos); with the completion of the seventh year one is presumed to have the use of reason.

the role to be undertaken and is willing and able to participate in the Eucharist with their candidates;

- not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared;
- not be the father nor mother of the one to be confirmed.⁵

2. It is recommended that the Confirmation sponsor be the baptismal sponsor so that the link between Baptism and Confirmation is expressed clearly.⁶ However, the Confirmation sponsor should not be so separated from the candidate by age or geography as to be unable to maintain appropriate contact with the candidate before and after Confirmation.

I. It is inappropriate to require an examination as a pre-requisite for the celebration of the sacrament of Confirmation.

J. Adaptations for Children

1. Children should be enrolled in a parish program of preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation in which children from the Catholic school and the catechetical ministry program are united.
2. Children who are home schooled should be enrolled in the parish sacramental preparation program and participate in all its dimensions: catechesis, ritual, service, spiritual (retreats, etc.) and any other requirements determined by the parish.
3. Parents/guardians and sponsors, when appropriate, of all children should participate in adult faith formation parent sessions offered by the parish to help them grow in their own understanding and appreciation of the sacrament of Confirmation and to assist them in catechizing their children. These sessions should be sensitive to the cultural experiences of those involved.

III. CATECHESIS FOR IMMEDIATE PREPARATION

A. Catechesis is to be based on:

1. the doctrinal and liturgical content of the *Rite of Confirmation*
2. the Liturgy of the Word from the Lectionary
3. the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit
4. the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

⁵ CCL #874

RCIA #10- Sponsors are persons who have known and assisted the candidates and stand as witnesses to the candidates' moral character, faith, and intention.

⁶ *Canon 893.2*: It is desirable that the one who undertook the role of sponsor at the Baptism be sponsor for Confirmation.

- B. Catechesis for the sacrament of Confirmation should:
1. Lead candidates to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the Eucharist and enable them to participate actively.
 2. Help the candidates become aware of the presence of Christ in the assembly, in the presider, in the Word and in a special way, in the Eucharistic elements.⁷
 3. Acquaint candidates with the major symbols of the sacrament and lead them to reflect on their meaning.
 4. Involve candidates in periods of reflection, prayer and retreat.
 5. Provide opportunities for the celebration of the sacrament of Penance during the season of Lent.
 6. Promote apostolic work as the mission of all the baptized by encouraging candidates to join other members of the parish community in living out this life of service both within and without the parish.
- C. Adaptation must be made for persons with disabilities according to their ability.⁸

IV. DISCERNMENT OF READINESS

- A. Pastoral practice presumes that persons requesting the sacrament are persons of goodwill and ask to celebrate Confirmation with a basic attitude of faith.
- B. The community represented by parish catechists, and, in the cases of children, by Catholic school religion teachers and parents should make recommendations to the pastor as to the readiness of their candidates.
- C. The parish priest or his delegate is to meet individually with each candidate during this time, since he must make the final discernment in the candidate's readiness to celebrate the sacrament.
- D. During the process the candidate's readiness is discerned from his/her attitude, values, practice and understanding of the sacraments, according to his or her age and ability.
- E. Recommendations regarding the celebration of the sacrament should not be based solely on the completion of service hours, as required by some schools, youth and catechetical programs.

⁷ GIRM #7. ... For at the celebration of Mass, which perpetuates the sacrifice of the cross, Christ is really present to the assembly gathered in his name; he is present in the person of the minister, in his own word, and indeed substantially and permanently under the eucharistic elements.

⁸ CCL # 777.4. ... catechetical formation is to be given to those handicapped in mind of body insofar as their conditions permits. Therefore, realistic provision must be made for persons with disabilities to be confirmed and to participate in the preparation for the sacrament according to this policy insofar as they are able.

V. MINISTRIES FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT

- A. The minister for the celebration of Confirmation is the Bishop or his delegate, unless the pastor of the parish has requested faculty or is celebrating the sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist) with an adult or a child who has reached the use of reason.⁹
- B. Different persons should exercise the variety of ministries that are encouraged in the celebration of the rite of Confirmation.
- C. Regular trained parish ministers who are fully initiated into the Church through the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist and properly prepared should be assigned. Ministers should be chosen for their qualifications and ability, not as means of recognition.
- D. Candidates for Confirmation may not exercise the following ministries: cantor, lector, server, or communion minister.

VI. CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT

- A. Candidates accepted for Confirmation preparation may begin with a simple but formal ritual of welcome into candidacy.¹⁰ This ceremony should take place no more than six months prior to the actual celebration of the sacrament.
- B. The sacrament of Confirmation is to be celebrated according to the norms of the *Rite of Confirmation* and this policy.
 - 1. The sacrament of Confirmation ordinarily takes place within a Mass.¹¹
 - 2. Sensitivity to the cultural experience of the community needs to be considered when preparing the liturgy.

⁹ *Rite of Confirmation* # 7 – The original minister of confirmation is the bishop. Ordinarily the sacrament is administered by the bishop so that there will be a more evident relationship to the first pouring forth of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. . . In addition to the bishop, the law gives the faculty to confirm to the following: . . . priests. It is required that these priests: be the pastors of the places where confirmation is conferred, pastors of the places where the candidates belong, or priests who have had a special part in the catechetical preparation of the candidates.

¹⁰ *RCIA* #411 – This optional rite welcomes baptized but previously uncatechized adults who are seeking to complete their Christian initiation through the sacraments of confirmation and eucharist or to be received into the full communion of the Catholic Church.
RCIA #417-433 for the *Rite of Welcoming the Candidates*

¹¹ *Rite of Confirmation* #13 – Ordinarily confirmation takes place within Mass in order to express more clearly the fundamental connection of this sacrament with the entirety of Christian initiation. The latter reaches its culmination in the communion of the body and blood of Christ the newly confirmed should therefore participate in the eucharist which completes their Christian initiation.

3. Those to be confirmed are to participate actively in the prayers, responses, and music of the celebration of Confirmation and participate in the Eucharist.
 4. The rite should be celebrated with bold symbols and ritual:
 - a. Introductory Rite
 - b. Liturgy of the Word
 - c. Sacrament of Confirmation: Presentation of the Candidates, Homily, Renewal of Baptismal Promises, The Laying on of Hands, Anointing with Chrism, Intercessions
 - d. Liturgy of the Eucharist
 - e. Concluding Rite
- C. Accommodations should be made for candidates with special needs. Interpreters of sign language for deaf and hearing-impaired candidates should be provided.
- D. Preparation for the celebration of the sacrament of Confirmation
1. Name: In order to express the intimate relationship of Confirmation to Baptism, all candidates are encouraged to use their baptismal name for Confirmation.¹²
 2. Role of Parents in the Ceremony: Parents may present their child to the Bishop for Confirmation in place of the sponsor.¹³
 3. Dress: The dress encouraged for the candidate should reflect the spirit of the ceremony. It should be simple and appropriate for church. Stoles are not to be worn by the candidates since they are symbols of ordained ministry. Confirmation gowns are strongly discouraged in order to avoid any suggestions of graduation.
 4. Photography and Video: During the liturgy, photography and videos may be used unobtrusively and at a distance without flash or special lighting so as not to distract the candidates and those participating.

¹² *RCIA # 33.4* – The National Conference of Catholic Bishops establishes as the norm in the dioceses of the United States that there is to be no giving of a new name. It also approves leaving to the discretion of the diocesan bishop the giving of a new name to persons from those cultures in which it is the practice of non-Christian religions to give a new name... # 200 ... The elect may choose a new name, which is either a traditional Christian name or a name of regional usage that is not incompatible with Christian beliefs...

¹³ *Rite of Confirmation #21* - ... If possible, each candidate is called by name and comes individually to the sanctuary. If the candidates are children, they are accompanied by one of their sponsors or parents and stand before the celebrant.

VII. POST-CONFIRMATION MYSTAGOGY

- A. The newly confirmed should gather to reflect on their experience of Confirmation.
- B. Catechesis toward lifelong conversion should continue for all newly confirmed adults, children and youth.
 - Adults should be expected to participate in adult faith formation programs and processes.
 - Children should be enrolled in parish catechetical programs or Catholic schools or they should be receiving catechesis as part of their home-schooling program.
 - Youth should be participating in parish youth ministry programs or be enrolled in a Catholic high school.¹⁴

VIII. RECORDS

- A. The names of the newly confirmed, the minister, parents and sponsors, and the place and date of the ceremony are to be written in the parish Confirmation register. This information is to be sent to the place of Baptism to be recorded in the Church's baptismal register.¹⁵
- B. The parishes are encouraged to notify the Catholic high schools of any of their students who were prepared and confirmed in the parish. This encourages the high school to recognize the students who have completed the sacraments of initiation and support them in their on-going faith formation.
- C. High schools who prepared students for Confirmation and celebrated the sacrament of Confirmation are to follow these procedures:
 1. The celebration of Confirmation is recorded in the parish where the celebration takes place. If Confirmation is celebrated in a place other than a parish, the high school must notify the parish within whose boundaries it is located so

¹⁴ *GDC #69*. Continuing or ongoing education in the faith follows upon basic education and presupposes it. Both fulfill two distinct but complementary functions of the ministry of the word while serving the process of continuing conversion. Initiatory catechesis lays the basis for the Christian life of the followers of Jesus. The process of continuing conversion goes beyond what is provided by basic catechesis.

Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us #13. Such lifelong formation is always needed and must be a priority in the Church's catechetical ministry; moreover, it must "be considered the chief form of catechesis. All the other forms, which are indeed always necessary, are in some way oriented to it.

¹⁵ CCL # 895- The names of the confirmed with mention of the minister, the parents and the sponsors, the place and the date of the conferral of confirmation are to be noted in the confirmation register in the diocesan curia, or, where the conference of bishops or the diocesan bishop has prescribed it, in a book kept in the parish archives; the pastor must advise the pastor the place of baptism about the conferral of confirmation so that notation be made in the baptismal register, in accord with the norm of Can. 535.2.

that the sacramental information can be recorded in the Confirmation register. (See A above.)

2. The parish of record notifies the parish of Baptism. Therefore it is imperative that high schools verify baptismal information directly from a baptismal certificate.
3. After Confirmation, the high school is encouraged to notify the pastor of the student's parish with the names of students in his parish who were confirmed.¹⁶ This encourages the parishes to recognize the students who have completed the sacraments of initiation and support them in their on-going faith formation.

IX. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

A. Reception of Baptized Christians into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church

Children and adults who are to be received into the Catholic Church are to be confirmed at the time of their reception into the Catholic Church. Confirmation should not be deferred "until the Bishop comes."¹⁷

1. See *RCIA* #473-504 for guidelines and rite for *Reception of Baptized Christians into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church*.
2. See *National Statutes for The Catechumenate (RCIA: Appendix III)*
 - *Children of Catechetical Age* #18-21
 - *Reception in Full Communion* #30-37: # 32-33 addresses the time of celebration: ordinarily takes place at the Sunday Eucharist (#32) and not at the Easter Vigil lest there be any confusion of such baptized Christians with candidates for Baptism...(#33)
 - *Sequence of Sacraments*: Confirmation before Eucharist. (#35)

¹⁶ *Rite of Confirmation* # 15 – If the pastor of the newly-confirmed person is not present, the minister should promptly inform him of the confirmation, either personally or through a representative.

¹⁷ *CCL Minister of Confirmation* #883.2 – The following have the faculty of administering confirmation by the law itself: with regard to the person in question, the presbyter who by reason of office or mandate of the diocesan bishop baptizes one who is no longer an infant or one already baptized whom he admits into the full communion of the Catholic Church.

B. Adults who have been validly baptized in the Catholic Church as children but who:

- were never fully catechized or instructed in the faith; or
- never celebrated the sacraments of Eucharist or Penance; or
- have suspended the active practice of the faith

may celebrate the sacrament of Confirmation and First Communion after having received proper catechesis.

1. The adult is ordinarily to be confirmed by the Bishop.
2. The Bishop may grant the faculty to administer confirmation to specified priests. This faculty will be granted in the Diocese of San José upon application in writing to the Bishop by the pastor or priests with the following stipulations:
 - a. the name of the adult to be confirmed be provided;
 - b. the pastoral case be described;
 - c. the catechetical preparation of the adult is affirmed; and
 - d. the date the sacrament will be celebrated is noted.

Confirmation of the adult would be unnecessarily delayed if it were to be deferred “until the Bishop comes.” [See *RCIA #400-472: Preparation of Uncatechized Adults for Confirmation and Eucharist* and *National Statutes for the Catechumenate #25-29: Uncatechized Adult Catholics #27* makes reference to the celebration of the sacrament of Reconciliation.]

C. Catholics belonging to any of the Eastern Rites (Byzantine, Melkite, Maronite, etc.) are not to celebrate Confirmation since Chrismation takes place at the time of Baptism (Confirmation is called Chrismation in the Eastern Rite.) Baptismal certificates should be checked to see if Chrismation has been celebrated. (See *CCC #1289-1292* for further information.)

Those who are members of any of the Eastern Orthodox Churches (Greek, Russian, etc.) are also not to celebrate Confirmation since Chrismation takes place at the time of Baptism.¹⁸

¹⁸ If a member of one of these communities wishes to become a Latin Rite Roman Catholic, the Latin Rite parish may only accept the Profession of Faith on behalf of the corresponding Eastern Rite Catholic Church. For example, if a Greek Orthodox wishes to become Catholic, the candidate becomes a member of the Greek-Melkite Catholic Church, not the Roman Catholic Church. If the candidate wishes to become a Roman Catholic, the Eastern Rite bishop needs to approve the transfer to the Roman Rite. Contact the Tribunal for more information. A Profession of Faith should be made.

D. The Relationship Between Confirmation and Marriage

The sacrament of Confirmation is not a requirement for celebrating the sacrament of Marriage since Canon Law #1065.1 states: “If they can do so without inconvenience, Catholics who have not yet received the sacrament of Confirmation are to receive it before being admitted to marriage.”

E. Restored Sequence of the Sacraments of Initiation

1. Parishes wishing to restore the sequence of the sacraments of initiation, Confirmation and Eucharist must:
 - address the criteria with the parish staff before seeking permission from the Bishop (see Appendix I);
 - write a letter to the Bishop requesting permission;
 - and be in contact with the Restored Sequence committee or with parishes involved in the restored sequence.

2. Once a parish has received permission to restore the original sequence of the sacraments, it may not revert to its previous practice without permission from the Bishop.

APPENDIX I RESTORED SEQUENCE CRITERIA

The Parish Staff

The Pastor and entire staff (pastoral, administrative, support and school) must be committed and all must:

- Be supportive of the catechumenate process (RCIA)
- Be supportive of the Restored Sequence
- Have a collaborative model of working together

All staff members i.e. (catechetical director, youth minister, catechetical and religion coordinators, principal, vice principal, teachers, parochial vicar, deacon, pastoral associate, liturgist) must:

- Be willing to educate themselves, and be aware of the extra time involved
- Have a theological understanding of the Restored Sequence and Confirmation
- Be aware of all aspects and impact of the Restored Sequence

Adult Faith Formation

Adult faith formation as emphasized in the recent document “Our Hearts Burning Within Us” is a priority for the parish.

Catechumenate Process (RCIA)

An authentic catechumenate process (RCIA) is to be in place for adults and children:

- Rites are to be celebrated according to the Rite Book (Rite of Acceptance, Scrutinies, Election etc.)
- The aim of the catechumenate process is conversion and discipleship
- An adapted catechumenate process for children is to be in place
- Full initiation, Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, is to be celebrated at the Easter Vigil or during a Sunday liturgy, within the Easter Season
- Confirmation for adults and children is to be celebrated at the same time as Baptism and Eucharist

On-going Catechesis

There is on-going and intentional catechesis preceding and following initiation for children, youth and adults. A family faith formation process is encouraged.

On-going Formation on the Restored Sequence for the Parish/School Community

The community is to have on-going catechesis on the Restored Sequence

- Infant baptism teams are to have a clear understanding of the Restored Sequence
- All catechists/teachers are to have a clear understanding of the Restored Sequence

Youth Ministry

Youth Ministry must be in place and must include the four components of:

- Liturgy, catechesis, service and social
- Catechesis for Confirmation should be a separate process from on-going catechesis
- Confirmation is to be presented as a Sacrament of Initiation and not as adult faith commitment

Mentoring

The parish staff must be willing to be mentored by parishes with experience in the Restored Sequence

Cultural Sensitivity

Parish staff is to be aware of and willing to address the impact of cultural diversity on pre-catechesis and on-going catechesis