

PASTORAL QUESTIONS

1. Why is it said that religious education is not completed with Confirmation?

Confirmation, as a sacrament of initiation, is really a beginning not an end. Through Confirmation catechesis we become more aware of the ongoing responsibilities in living out a Catholic Christian life. Our faith relationship with God is one that must constantly grow and change as we mature. The baptismal catechumenate, which serves as the inspiration for all catechesis, includes a period called mystagogy (GDC, 90-91). "In the broader sense, mystagogy represents the Christian's lifelong education and formation in the faith. By analogy it signifies the continuous character of catechesis in the life of the Christian. Conversion to Christ is a lifelong process that should be accompanied at every stage by a vital catechesis that leads Christians on their journey towards holiness. Religious formation, therefore, is a life-long process" (NDC, 35. D).

2. Why is Confirmation celebrated in parishes rather than in Catholic Schools?

The parish is the ecclesial locus for the preparation and celebration of sacraments. The parish is a community of people who offers support to fellow Christians throughout life. School ends, but parish life into which the person is initiated, ideally continues to offer support through adolescence and adulthood (ongoing catechesis, weddings, baptisms of future children, etc.) (NCD, 119; GDC, 254; NDC, 60).

3. Do Catholic school students need to be involved in their parish Confirmation catechesis?

Because Confirmation is a parish community celebration uniting all persons who seek the sacraments with the other members of the parish, the candidates should participate together in immediate, focused Confirmation catechesis. Formation should focus on building the Body of Christ in the parish, as it is the primary community of faith. A well-designed Confirmation catechesis will complement existing programs, building on what is being taught in both school and parish religious education classes. The content for immediate sacramental preparation should be separate from "Faith themes" covered in separate catechetical sessions [see Confirmation formation models]. A Confirmation retreat should include specific content different from other retreat formats. Where service is a part of the Catholic school mission, parishes should make consideration for these efforts. Some opportunity for group sharing of the meaning of service can offer important feedback for Christian living. Dialogue between school and parish personnel is essential.

4. How should candidates be prepared who receive catechetical formation in the home?

The candidate should

- be in the 10th-11th grade.
- participate in the parish's immediate, focused sacramental catechesis including retreats and service opportunities.
- be evaluated by the pastor or designated catechetical leader/catechist according to the qualifications section [p.24] and Confirmation catechetical outcomes section [pp.42-43] of these Guidelines.

5. How much influence should parents have on a young person's decision for Confirmation?

It is important to affirm parents' response in faithfully carrying out their commitment to their child's baptismal promises by encouraging their adolescent's involvement in Confirmation formation as well as supporting other essential dimensions in Christian living. At the same time, parents should be educated in the importance of their adolescent's free consent to the invitation in the formation process, an invitation to deepen their experience of God's love and to respond freely. While parents should continue to give witness to their children through their own example of Christian living, the actual decision to receive or delay the sacrament should be made by the candidate. Parishes should assist parents with their own catechetical formation.

6. May parents or stepparents be Confirmation sponsors?

According to the Code of Canon Law, canons 893, §1 and 874, §1, 5°, parents may not be sponsors for their children. A stepparent, at least to some extent, assumes the role of the parent and should not be a sponsor for their stepchild. A parent or stepparent may present the candidate to the Bishop during the ceremony.

7. May a candidate have more than one sponsor?

Normally, there is a single sponsor. In maintaining the intimate connection between Baptism and Confirmation, it is desirable that the sponsor be the one who undertook this role at Baptism. If a person had both a male and female baptismal sponsor, those two may fulfill the role of Confirmation sponsor. In the liturgical celebration, it is desirable that a single sponsor or parent present the candidate to the confirming minister (Canons 893, 873, OC 5, Archdiocesan Pastoral Manual, G-3. B.3).

8. May someone at a long distance away be a sponsor while someone else represent the candidate at the ceremony by proxy?

Yes, however, it is recommended that someone nearby be asked to be a sponsor so that he/she can become more involved in the candidate's preparation (Archdiocesan Pastoral Manual, G-3. B.4).

9. Can persons with cognitive or physical disabilities be confirmed?

Yes, catechesis and Confirmation preparation programs need to be adapted on an individual basis so that the spiritual growth and community involvement of the candidate is both encouraged and enriched according to their abilities (*Please see the **DISABILITY** section*) [Canon 777, 4°].

11. If a young person was confirmed at birth may he/she be confirmed again?

No, Confirmation may not be repeated [Canon 845]. The young persons can be encouraged to participate in the preparation and celebration. At the time of Confirmation, after all have been confirmed, they can be greeted and blessed rather than anointed.

12. Does one need to be confirmed prior to being married ?

Catholics who have not yet received the sacrament of confirmation are to receive it before they are admitted to marriage if it can be done without grave inconvenience (*Canon 1065, §1*). Confirmation should be celebrated before being married. If one has not been confirmed and presents oneself for marriage, then Confirmation should be celebrated if the person can be adequately prepared and Confirmation is scheduled in that parish or nearby before the marriage takes place. If it is impossible to prepare someone for Confirmation adequately before marriage, then the priest or deacon should proceed with the wedding but use every means possible to see that the person is confirmed on the first occasion after the marriage has taken place.

13. Is taking a special name for Confirmation necessary?

In order to emphasize the close relationship between confirmation and baptism, it is preferred that candidates retain their baptismal names. However, a special name may be chosen if desired. Selecting a name for Confirmation involves a decision by the young person and their parents. It may be the first time that they have considered the lives of the saints as models or helpers for their lives.

If a baptismal name is a name foreign to Christian sensibility, then it is advisable that a name be chosen which reflects a recognized saint of the Church, a person from scripture or a Christian role model (Canon 855).

14. How should the names of the confirmed be recorded?

Following the liturgy, the cards with the names of those confirmed, as well as the names of the minister, parents, and sponsors, and a notation of the place and date of the Confirmation conferred, are to be entered in the parish Confirmation register of the confirmed [Canon 535, §1]. For those confirmed who were baptized in the parish, the information is to be recorded in the Baptismal register as well. For those persons baptized elsewhere, the typed card used in the ceremony, is mailed to the parish where the confirmed was baptized (Rite of Confirmation #14, Canon 895, 535 §2). If the pastor of the place was not present, the minister either personally or through another is to inform him as soon as possible of the conferral of confirmation (Canon 896).

15. What is the proper attire for the Rite of Confirmation?

- a. Candidates should dress modestly as they present themselves to the parish community. Thus, specific guidelines should be discussed with the candidates, sponsors, and parents prior to the ceremony. Appropriate attire for males would be coat and trousers, shirt and tie. Females should wear a dress or professional dress suit, appropriate for church – one with a modest hem [knee length or longer] and neckline [no plunging necklines, strapless or spaghetti-strap dresses].
- b. The current practice in some places of using stoles or robes at Confirmation seems to have arisen out of the desire to provide a symbol signifying the candidate'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 ordained ministers is used in this manner. It should, therefore, be avoided.

16. What is the Catholic Church's acceptance as valid confirmation from other ecclesial community traditions of confirmation?

- a. The Orthodox Church: A valid confirmation.
- b. Protestant denominations [including Episcopal]: Not a valid confirmation.

"One must be baptized to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. In addition, if the baptized person has the use of reason, it is required that he/she be in a state of grace, properly instructed and able to renew his/ her baptismal promises."

(Rite of Confirmation, Introduction 12)

The faithful are obliged to receive this sacrament at the proper time. Parents and pastors of souls, especially pastors of parishes, are to take care that the faithful are properly instructed to receive the sacrament and come to it at the appropriate time.

(Code of Canon Law, canon 890)

Lay persons are bound by the obligation and possess the right to acquire knowledge of Christian doctrine appropriate to the capacity and condition of each in order for them to be able to live according to this doctrine, announce it themselves, defend it if necessary and take their part in exercising the apostolate.

(Code of Canon Law, canon 229, §1)

Persons who because of developmental or mental disabilities are encouraged either directly or, through their parents or guardian, to receive the sacrament of Confirmation.

(USCCB Guidelines, 16, 1995)