

CONFIRMATION SACRAMENTAL GUIDELINES

FOR
CHILDREN
OF
APPROPRIATE
CATECHETICAL AGE



IN
THE DIOCESE OF BIRMINGHAM IN ALABAMA

GENERAL GUIDELINES

“Pastors of souls...have the duty to take care that those who seek the sacraments are prepared to receive them by proper evangelization and catechetical instruction, attentive to the norms issued by competent authority.” (canon 843§2)

A pastor may delay the reception of any sacrament, to provide time for sacramental preparation.

“Just as Baptism is the source of responsibilities and duties, the baptized person also enjoys rights within the Church: To receive the sacraments, to be nourished with the word of God, and to be sustained by other spiritual helps of the Church.” (CCC 1269)

The right to receive each sacrament is balanced by the responsibility of being properly prepared to receive it. Pastors should provide every available resource to teach a child of the appropriate age what he or she needs to know in order to worthily receive each sacrament. In many cases, this will mean formal classroom instruction of some kind, though in some circumstances it may be best to appoint a sponsor or godparent who will work with a child individually, outside of regular classroom time.

Students who are attending **regional Catholic Schools**, not attached to their Parish, have the option of receiving the Sacraments of First Penance, First Holy Communion and Confirmation either along with their Catholic School class or along with their Parish School of Religion class.

Students who are **Home-Schooled** need to receive the Sacraments of First Penance, First Holy Communion and Confirmation along with their Parish School of Religion class at their Parish. It is essential that **Parents** keep their Pastor advised of the Sacramental Plans they have for their children, as every Pastor is responsible for insuring that each student is properly catechized in the faith.

Following the tradition of the Church, and the norms defined by the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, canon law supports the unity of the initiatory sacraments: “The sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Most Holy Eucharist are so interrelated that they are required for full Christian initiation (§842.2). Just as with adults, the parish priest is authorized to confirm children who are no longer infants (§883.2) and the candidate for Confirmation should be at about the age of discretion: (seven or eight years old) (§891). Canon law supports a pastoral practice in which children of catechetical age are initiated into the Catholic Church through the preparation for and celebration of the unified Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist.

PREPARATION FOR CONFIRMATION

General Guidelines

It is evident from the celebration that the effect of the sacrament of Confirmation is the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit as granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost. (CCC 1302)

Preparation for Confirmation should be a joyful and pleasant experience. It should involve not only prayer and study but also service to the Church and the community. The catechesis on prayer should emphasize the Mass as the most powerful prayer along with daily personal prayer such as praying the Morning Offering.

Candidates should have a ready understanding of the 7 Sacraments and Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Candidates should participate in as many of the **4 dimensions of Stewardship** as possible, namely:

1. Sharing their **Time**- visiting those who are sick or alone or in need of help.
2. Sharing their **Talent**-using one's gifts and abilities to assist others.
3. Sharing their **Treasure**-giving a portion of one's money to help others in need.
4. Sharing their **Tradition**-discussing their faith and inviting others to embrace it.

The Sacrament of Confirmation confers the fullness of the Holy Spirit such that:

- Confirmation unites us more firmly to Christ.
- Confirmation increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us.
- Confirmation makes our bond with the Church more perfect.
- Confirmation gives us 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. (CCC 1303)

Candidates must choose a Saint's name for their Confirmation name. Baptismal names may be used if they are a Saint's name. Candidates should research the life of the Saint, so that the name will have special meaning and importance in their lives.

A sponsor for Confirmation must be a practicing Catholic who has been confirmed, is at least sixteen years of age, and is in full Communion with the Catholic Church. The sponsor should not be the father or mother of the one to be confirmed. The sponsor should be a model for the person being confirmed. (CCC 1311; canons 893§1 and §874)

Notification of reception of the sacrament of Confirmation must be sent to the church where the child was baptized.

Catechetical Guidelines

Preparation for Confirmation should aim at leading the Catholic toward a more intimate union with Christ and a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit; his actions, his gifts, and his biddings, 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: to the universal Church as well as to the parish community. (CCC 1309)

- Preparation for Confirmation should be presented as one more step in the lifelong formation of a Catholic. It should *not* give the appearance of graduating from formation.
- A Chastity Education component is to be incorporated into every parish Confirmation program. The approved curricula are: “Family Honor” and “Theology of the Body for Teens, M.S. edition”
- Prayer should be an important component of preparation.
- A retreat should be offered to all candidates; however, inability to participate in a retreat should not be used as a reason for delaying reception of the sacrament.
- All Confirmation preparation activities should be directly related to receiving the fullness of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
- Candidates should write letters of anticipation to the Bishop only if the catechist feels this gesture would aid the candidate in his or her preparation to receive the sacrament. Spontaneity is appreciated.

Ritual Guidelines

- The appropriate dress for Confirmation is “Sunday best” (sport coats and ties for boys and dresses for girls). Formal robes should not be worn.
- Stoles are not a proper symbol for Confirmation and should not be worn.
- The readings of the day are always used for Sunday Confirmation liturgies.
- The Mass for Confirmation shall be used where Liturgical laws permit. The Gloria is not sung or said in the Votive Mass; red vestments are to be worn.

It is my hope that these guidelines will enable pastors, catechists, and parents to more completely fulfill their graced responsibility to educate our children in the faith, leading them into the fullness of sacramental life, while keeping before their eyes the salvation of souls, which is always the supreme law of the Church (£ 1752).

In Christ’s love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Robert J. Baker". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Robert J. Baker, S.T.D.
Bishop of Birmingham in Alabama