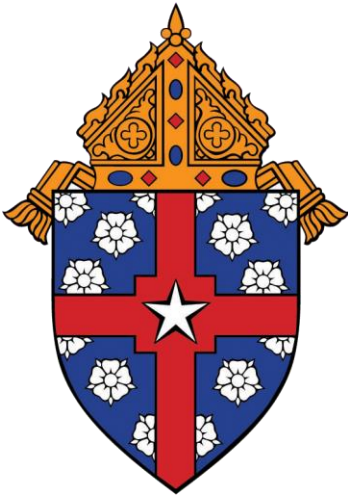


CONFIRMATION GUIDELINES AND RESOURCES



THE ARCHDIOCESE OF GALVESTON-HOUSTON

**March 2007
Includes 2023 Norms**

Office of Adolescent Catechesis and Evangelization

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March 16, 2007

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am pleased to approve the publication for the revised *Archdiocesan Confirmation Guidelines and Resources*. The 2007 revision of the Guidelines incorporates several of our contemporary Church documents and pastoral practices as well as some essential points that I, as your Archbishop, would like to see put into practice. I sincerely appreciate the catechetical efforts of all those involved in the Confirmation formation process including the diligent preparation and commitment of the youth themselves. It is my heartfelt desire that our young people experience the invitation of God's love in the sacrament of Confirmation, a completion of their baptismal grace. It is my conviction that out of their deepening recognition of Christ's love for them as well as their growing familiarity with the Holy Spirit's presence within them, that they will respond generously to the Church's universal call to holiness. And indeed the Church will be showered with the abundant fruit of the Holy Spirit through the lives of these young people!

In practice, we must prepare our young people to encounter Christ through our Catholic faith. This encounter with God's love, which the adolescent candidate first experienced at his or her baptism, must be continually nurtured in the family and through the parish community of faith. The parish community proposes to the adolescent that, in this sacramental encounter with Christ and deepening of their familiarity with the Holy Spirit, they will experience the abundant life which Christ has promised. It proposes that the young person will be strengthened by the Holy Spirit to live more intentionally the apostolic life. They are to realize that they are called and sent. For this experience to be believable to the adolescent, the parish community itself must be a credible witness to God's love. It must exhibit the same faithful living to which it invites the candidates. Adults, including parents, sponsors and the other parishioners must demonstrate a mature faith by participating weekly in Sunday liturgy, exhibiting a generous spirit of hospitality and stewardship, exemplifying a life of morality and justice grounded in Christ and the Church's teachings, engaging in daily prayer and a love of the Scriptures, and continuing to grow in their own faith formation.

Into such a parish setting, the young person can experience a well ordered and comprehensive catechesis of their faith. We must provide opportunities for adolescents to deepen this love through immersion in Sacred Scripture, in the sacraments, through prayer, and through the teachings of the Church. Thus, the parish gives witness to a way of life called Christian discipleship into which the young person is invited to experience and respond to the abundant love of Christ. In this way, the adolescent disciple learns how to be holy through the example of others. Their hearts and souls become better attuned with Christ as they offer themselves more generously in service to others, thus fulfilling Christ's mission to bring the Good News to all people.

It is within such a Christian spirit, that I strongly encourage you to use these Guidelines to provide a consistent, coherent, and comprehensive catechesis. The Archdiocesan norm which I have established for the sacrament of Confirmation to take place is the 10th or 11th grade with a minimum of one year for immediate preparation for the sacrament.

As your Archbishop, I am deeply grateful for your commitment and efforts in helping prepare our young people for the sacrament of Confirmation. You share in the ministry and mission of the Church – to bring Christ to the whole world.

Fraternally in Christ,

Most Reverend Daniel N. DiNardo
Archbishop of Galveston-Houston

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CONFIRMATION FORMATION

The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, that the Father will send in my name – he will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have told you. [John 14:26]

“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 - his action, his gifts, and his bidding - 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. The latter bears special responsibility for the preparation of the confirmands.” [CCC: 1309].

GOALS FOR MINISTRY WITH ADOLESCENTS

1. To empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today.
2. To draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the Catholic community.
3. To foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person.

- *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry, 1997*



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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2007 COMMITTEE FOR DEVELOPING ARCHDIOCESAN CONFIRMATION GUIDELINES

The Office of Adolescent Catechesis and Evangelization would like to thank the following persons for their work in the review and revisions of the Archdiocesan Guidelines for Confirmation:

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INTRODUCTION TO THE ARCHDIOCESAN GUIDELINES FOR CONFIRMATION

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE & RATIONALE FOR THE REVISED GUIDELINES

The Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston first implemented *Confirmation Catechesis Guidelines* in 1987. The Guidelines have served to provide consistent formation efforts throughout the Archdiocese. The Guidelines were revised in 2000 to incorporate new Church documents which offered insights into preparing adolescent Christian disciples. The 2007 Confirmation Guidelines maintained many of the existing processes for Confirmation formation. These processes have been integrated with the general principles for sacramental catechesis and specific Confirmation catechesis from the USCCB's National Directory for Catechesis, 2005, along with specific directives from His Eminence Daniel Cardinal DiNardo. In 2022 the Office of Adolescent Catechesis and Evangelization provided minor updates and refreshed where needed.

The sacrament of Confirmation in the adolescent years can be understood best as the completion of Baptism and a special encounter with God who strengthens one's baptismal faith in order to be missioned as a more active witness for Christ. This gift from God of the Spirit's strengthening love is a special moment in the lifelong journey of faith. Rather than a graduation from one's Catholic faith, Confirmation is an empowerment by God to more actively live one's faith which is continuously nourished primarily in the weekly Sunday Eucharist.

Preparation for and reception of Confirmation ultimately bears the greatest fruit in the life of a baptized disciple who strives to live in faithful communion with Christ as an active member of the local Church. The pastoral challenges in our culture and age note that there is a continuum of adolescents and their families who have been engaged in various levels of faith development. This prompts a serious call to address this challenge through the "new evangelization" of the already baptized which was initiated by Pope John Paul II and is likewise encouraged by Pope Benedict XVI. The current challenge for the entire Church translates into providing not only quality immediate sacramental preparation for the adolescent disciple, but also in renewing the adolescent's own commitment to his or her baptismal grace through an active life of Christian discipleship. Through the witness of the entire parish community, the adolescent disciple experiences the meaning of Christian discipleship. No preparation program can adequately prepare a young disciple without the commitment by the entire parish community to an active living of its members' own baptismal grace.

The Revised Guidelines address the following:

1. Providing Confirmation preparation within the context of lifelong faith formation.
2. *The National Directory for Catechesis, 2005: General Principles for Sacramental Catechesis and Confirmation Catechesis*
2. Specific areas of Confirmation formation emphasized by Cardinal DiNardo
3. Updates on pastoral questions
4. Practical models for developing Confirmation formation within lifelong systematic catechesis.
5. Practical models for engaging parents, sponsors, and the community of faith.

Church Documents

- *Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1997.*
- *Code of Canon Law 1983.*
- *General Directory for Catechesis, USCCB, 1997.*
- *Renewing the Vision, A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry, USCCB, 1997.*
- *From Age to Age: The Challenge of Worship with Adolescents, NFCYM, 1997.*

- *Archdiocesan Guidelines for Children and Adolescents*, 1994.
- *Pastoral Statement of United States Catholic Bishops on People with Disabilities*, 1978.
- *Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities*, USCCB, 1995.
- *National Directory for Catechesis*, USCCB, 2005.

CONFIRMATION NORMS 2023

I. THE CANDIDATE

1. These norms apply only to youth or adults baptized into the Catholic Church as infants or received into the Catholic Church as an infant by means of a parent's profession of faith. Those who were validly baptized into another Church or ecclesial community and have reached the age of reason, are to complete their initiation according to the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.
2. Confirmation can only be given once (CIC, cc. 845 §1, 889 §1). Those who were confirmed in a Church not in union with the Roman Catholic Church need to have the validity of that celebration examined. For those situations in which Confirmation is doubtful, they may be confirmed conditionally with the approval of the Chancellor (CIC, c. 845 §2). For questions or exceptions regarding the validity of Confirmation, contact the Tribunal.
3. Catholics are obliged to seek the Sacrament of Confirmation at the proper time (CIC, cc. 890). Outside of the danger of death, in order to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation the candidate is to be suitably instructed, properly disposed, and able to renew Baptism promises (CIC, c. 889 §2).
 - a. For those who are in danger of death, even if under the age of seven, the sacrament should be administered (CIC, c. 891). An infant in danger of death must be confirmed.
 - b. For those who have cognitive, emotional, physical, or behavioral disabilities, they may be confirmed but should be instructed according to their capacities (CIC c. 889 §2).
4. In the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston the normative time to celebrate the sacrament is no earlier than the 10th grade [except for the previously mentioned cases where there is danger of death or other grave pastoral reasons].
5. Individuals less than 18 years of age or currently in high school are to be prepared according to a preparation process designed for youth from the Office of Adolescent Catechesis and Evangelization. Those 18 years of age or older and no longer in high school are to be prepared according to a preparation process designed for adults by the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis.
6. A discernment process is to be used to determine an individual's readiness to enter the preparation for and, after appropriate formation, celebration of the sacrament (Sacramental Catechesis, p. 16).
 - a. Religious readiness to enter into preparation not only depends on chronological age, but also on the individual's preparedness to enter fruitfully into a process of preparation. It is the responsibility of the candidate to request participation for and reception of the sacrament. An individual's readiness to begin preparation for the sacrament is to be discerned by the following criteria:
 - i. ability to renew baptismal promises
 - ii. a developmentally appropriate understanding and practice of the faith for one's mental capacity.
 - iii. reception of the Sacrament of the Most Holy Eucharist
 - iv. a life consistent with the teachings of the Catholic Church
 - v. a developmentally appropriate desire to begin preparation
 - vi. commitment to active involvement in the parish Confirmation catechesis.
 - b. Readiness for the celebration of the sacrament is to be determined through a discernment interview(s) conducted with the individual by the pastor or his delegate. If the pastor, or his delegate, deems the individual is not sufficiently prepared or there is not a sincere commitment to receive the sacrament, it may be recommended that the celebration of the sacrament be postponed. However, the preparation of the individual to receive the sacrament is to continue so that the postponement is a relatively short period of time (CIC, cc. 843, 890).
 - c. Religious readiness for celebration of this sacrament considers not only chronological age but also the individual's preparedness to encounter Christ in this sacramental celebration (NCD #126). An individual's readiness for the celebration of the sacrament is to be discerned using the following criteria:
 - i. Suitable instruction:

- a developmentally appropriate expression of the desire to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation and to live a life more closely attuned to the person of Jesus Christ and to the Holy Spirit
 - a consistent engagement in the preparation process including participation in Confirmation formation, service experiences, and Confirmation retreats.
- ii. Prayerfully ready to receive the Holy Spirit (CCC, no. 1310) / ability to renew baptism promises: expression of how being anointed in Confirmation strengthens his or her baptismal conferral of the Holy Spirit to carry out more intentionally the mission of the Church by bearing witness to the Christian faith in words and deeds
- iii. Properly Disposed:
- being in a state of grace, free of canonical impediments i.e. married outside the Church, divorce and remarriage outside the Church (CCC, no. 1310)

II. THOSE INVOLVED IN PREPARATION

A. PARENT(S)/GUARDIAN(S)

1. For those in a youth preparation process, a parent or guardian should attend a Confirmation Orientation. If the parent/guardian does not attend, this does not restrict the youth's right to receive the sacrament (CIC, c.843 §1).
2. For those in a youth preparation process, parent(s)/guardian(s) are to continue to guide and encourage their child's spiritual development by offering their continuing support to their child's full participation in faith formation. They are to provide a Christian witness to their child by their own continuing efforts to model Christian discipleship (CIC, cc. 226, 1055).

B. PARISH FORMATION TEAM:

1. The pastor, or in his absence a parochial vicar, is to be involved personally in an essential way in the preparation process.
2. The pastor may direct the preparation process personally, or he may appoint a coordinator or a coordinating team for the preparation process.
3. The coordinator or coordinating team is charged with implementing Archdiocesan norms.
4. The coordinator or coordinating team is assisted by catechists.
5. Coordinators, coordinating team members, and catechists are to:
 - a. be adults at least 18 years old, fully initiated Catholics who lives a life of faith in accordance with official teaching of the Catholic Church
 - b. be experienced and knowledgeable in catechesis specific to the developmental level with whom he or she works
 - c. per Archdiocesan norm, have completed formation appropriate for the role that he or she has undertaken.
 - For youth Confirmation coordinators, this includes the Archdiocesan retreat training sponsored by the Office of Adolescent Catechesis and Evangelization which needs to be completed prior to planning or participating in a Confirmation retreat.
6. All clergy, employees, and volunteers, over the age of 18, are required to complete the Archdiocesan Safe Environment Training and a criminal background check before they may assist with the Confirmation process.
7. Those working with persons with disabilities should obtain the necessary training and be familiar with the Guidelines for Celebrating Sacraments for Persons with Disabilities document. (GDC, no. 189).

C. THE SPONSOR

1. Per Archdiocesan norms, unless there is a grave reason contrary, there is to be a sponsor for each of those to be confirmed. The sponsor:

- a. guides the candidate in acting as a true witness of Christ
 - b. brings the candidate to receive the sacrament,
 - c. presents him/her to the minister for the anointing
 - d. continues to help him/her to fulfill his/her baptismal promises faithfully under the influence of the Holy Spirit
2. To be permitted to take on the function of sponsor a person must:
- a. be designated by the one to be confirmed
 - b. have completed the sixteenth year of age, unless the pastor or minister has granted an exception for a just cause
 - c. be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist and who leads a life of faith in keeping with the function to be taken on (e.g. if married, marriage must be recognized by the Catholic Church as valid);
 - d. not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared;
 - e. not be the parent or step-parent of the one to be confirmed (c.f. CIC, c. 874)
3. In maintaining the intimate connection between Baptism and Confirmation, it is desirable that the sponsor be the one who undertook this role at Baptism (CIC 893 §2).
4. Normally, there is a single sponsor, but if a person desires to have two one must be a biological male and the other a biological female. (CIC 873).
5. In our Archdiocese during the liturgical celebration, only a single sponsor or proxy will present the candidate to the confirming minister.

D. PARISH COMMUNITY

1. The parish community is itself a primary agent in the catechizing of those preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation (c.f. NDC 35, D). The preparation process must in some fashion provide concrete opportunities for the parish community to acknowledge, witness to, and prayerfully support those preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation (CIC, cc. 208, 209 §2, 210, 211, 225, 229).

III. CATECHESIS

1. 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 – his actions, his gifts, and his biddings – in order to be more capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities of Christian life. Catechesis should awaken a sense of belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ, the universal Church as well as the parish community. (CCC 1309).
2. It is expected that candidates will have achieved a developmentally appropriate understanding and practice of their faith prior to entering into immediate preparation. For youth this means participation in systematic catechesis, either in a Catholic School, a parish faith formation program, or a formal, approved home-based catechesis program is a necessary pre-requisite. For adults this will be determined during the initial discernment conversation in the conjunction with the Archdiocesan program options
3. Systematic catechesis serves as the proximate preparation or pre-catechumenal phase that creates a foundation for the immediate preparation for Confirmation. Sacramental catechesis is to be separate and distinct from ongoing systematic catechesis.
4. Immediate preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation is the catechumenal stage that occurs just prior to the celebration of the Sacrament and focuses its content on the sacrament of Confirmation.
5. The parish, where the Christian community is formed and expressed, is the primary place where the immediate sacramental preparation of all candidates occurs.
6. In order to emphasize the close relationship between Confirmation and Baptism, it is desirable (but not required) that candidates retain their baptismal names.
- a. The chosen or baptismal name should not be foreign to Christian sensibility (CIC, c. 855).
 - b. The candidate may choose a name which reflects a recognized saint of the Church, a person from Scripture or a Christian role model if desired. Since many children these days are not given saint/Christian names at all in Baptism, Confirmation provides an opportunity for them to assume one.

7. The content of catechesis for immediate preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation (NDC 36, A2 [pg. 123]):

- a. Teaches the unity of the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation (c.f. CCC, nos. 1285, 1298).
- b. Teaches that Confirmation increases and deepens the grace of Baptism, imprinting an indelible character on the soul (CCC, no. 1303-1305; USCCA, p. 207).
- c. Teaches that Confirmation strengthens the baptismal conferral of the Holy Spirit on those confirmed in order to incorporate them more firmly in Christ, strengthens their bond with the Church, associates them more closely with the Church's mission, increases in them the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and helps them bear witness to the Christian faith in words and deeds (LG, no. 11; CCC, no. 1285; CCC, no. 1303, USCCA, pp. 207-209; CIC, c. 879; CCEO, c. 692).
- d. Explains that the Pentecost event carries on God's plan for salvation in the Church and teaches about the role of the Holy Spirit, his gifts and his fruits, in the life of the Church, empowering the confirmed to participate in the mission of the Church (CCC 1309)
- e. Explains and articulates the meaning of the Nicene Creed as the Trinity's creative, redemptive, and sanctifying love alive in the Church and in the candidate's daily lives.
- f. Explains the words, gestures, signs, and symbols of the Rite, including emphasis on the anointing with Sacred Chrism/Holy Myron, the imposition of hands, and the words, "Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit." (CCC, nos. 1293-1301; USCCA, pp.204-206)
- g. Teaches that the ordinary minister of the sacrament is a bishop in the Latin Catholic Church and a priest in the Eastern Catholic Churches (CCC, nos. 1312-1313; CIC, c. 882; CCEO, c. 694).
- h. Explains the commitment to discipleship including lifelong faith formation following Confirmation, being an active witness to the faith, practicing stewardship, and fulfilling the precepts of the Church. (c.f. CCC, no. 2042)

8. Catechesis is to include Confirmation retreat experiences (NDC 36.A.2). For serious reasons, pastors can make individual exceptions and provide other means to satisfy this requirement.

9. To receive the Sacrament of Confirmation one must be in a state of grace. The parish community is to provide the candidate the opportunity as well as the encouragement to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation shortly before celebrating the Sacrament of Confirmation in order to be cleansed for the gift of the Holy Spirit (CCC, no. 1310).

10. Catechesis is always to respect the natural disposition, ability, age, language, culture, and circumstances of individuals. Special attention is to be given to assist persons with special needs, or cognitive, emotional, physical, or behavioral disabilities (c.f. U.S. Bishops' Guidelines for Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities, 6/95).

11. Catechesis is to be provided in the language of the candidate and family as needed. Personnel who minister to the candidate and family are to be sensitive to their needs with special attention to a hospitable environment. Materials and resources which are appropriate to the cultural context are to be provided.

12. Confirmation preparation should follow an approved catechetical curriculum. For youth, a primary Confirmation catechetical resource that has been found to be in conformity with the Catechism of the Catholic Church by the USCCB subcommittee on the use of the Catechism is to be provided to each candidate. For adult candidates for Confirmation, formation is to be conducted according to the Archdiocesan program.

13. There is to be a period of mystagogy to enable those who have celebrated the Sacrament of Confirmation to reflect on the meaning of the experience and integrate it into their daily lives as disciples of Jesus Christ.

IV. THE CELEBRATION

1. Per Archdiocesan norms the group celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation will normally occur only in the context of the mass.

2. A parish church is the place in which the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation is to take place.
3. Liturgical celebrations are solemn and sacred occasions. Candidates, Sponsors, as well as the assembly, are to dress in a fashion that reflects the reverence of the occasion. They are to present themselves at their best with appropriate Christian modesty.
4. Stoles or robes are not to be worn by the candidates at Confirmation.
5. The Sacrament of Confirmation is to be celebrated in the language and cultural context of the assembly. Worship aids and music are to be appropriate to the cultural context. (PM P30, D3)

V. RECORDS

1. Proof of Baptism (certificate with any subsequent notations) is to be obtained from the parish of baptism. In the case of candidates having completed their seventeenth year and out of high school, the certificate is to be issued within six months of the start of formation.
2. The names of those confirmed, the minister, the parents, the sponsors and the place and date of Confirmation are to be recorded in the Confirmation Register of the person's current parish. If a candidate for Confirmation is confirmed at a parish other than his/her current parish, it is the responsibility of the parish where the Confirmation took place to notify the candidate's parish, so that the Confirmation can be recorded at the candidate's current parish.
3. For those confirmed in their parish of baptism, the information is to be recorded in the baptismal register as well. (CIC, c. 535 §2).
4. For those persons baptized elsewhere, the typed card used in the ceremony, is to be mailed to the parish where the confirmed was baptized (Rite of Confirmation #14, CIC c. 895, 535 §2).

Abbreviations:

CCEO	Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium (Code of Canons of the
Eastern Churches) CIC	Codex Iuris Canonici (Code of Canon Law)
GDC	General Directory for Catechesis
NDC	National Directory for Catechesis
USCCA	United States Catholic Catechism for Adults



CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

A Process of Lifelong Conversion

Confirmation formation can best be understood both in its relationship with Baptism and Eucharist and within the Church's broader vision of Christian discipleship. The following offers a systematic overview of this process.

I. The Second Vatican Council's "Universal Call to Holiness"

II. The Creed: Foundation and Framework for Christian Discipleship & Catechesis

- A. The Baptismal Catechumenate: Inspiration for all Catechesis
- B. The Two Stages of Christian Discipleship: Initiatory & Ongoing Catechesis
- C. The Six Tasks of Catechesis

III. Adult Catechesis as the Axis for All Catechesis

Adolescent Catechesis & Comprehensive Youth Ministry

IV. Two Dimensions of Catechesis: Systematic and Sacramental

- A. General Principles for Sacramental Catechesis [NDC, 35, B]
- B. Confirmation Catechesis as defined by the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the National Directory for Catechesis

V. Canon Law in Catechesis

I. The Universal Call to Holiness

The Second Vatican Council reminds us that “all Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity” (LG 40, 2). When we are baptized into the death of Christ, we are raised to a new life in Christ. This begins our “spiritual progress (which) tends toward ever more intimate union with Christ” (CCC: 2014). We grow individually and as the Body of Christ in our awareness and experience of God’s passionate longing to embrace us in loving union for all eternity. Our earthly journey is always a movement toward our eternal destiny – to live in communion with God. Our Catholic faith and participation in the liturgy guides us to open ourselves to God’s love and teaches us how to respond in love.

II. The Creed

At every Sunday liturgy, the assembly along with the priest professes the Creed which recalls and confirms what we believe as a Christian community. We acknowledge the mystery of the Trinitarian love of God in the three Divine Persons of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We recall that in God’s divine plan, the Father sent Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary, as the Incarnation of God’s sacrificial love for us. We proclaim the triumph of Christ’s death and resurrection over humankind’s sin and the power of death. We profess our belief that the Holy Spirit is Christ’s promised gift to us who freely comes to dwell within each of us at our baptism when we are anointed and sealed as God’s own to participate in Christ’s priesthood. We remember that the Holy Spirit leads and guides, consoles and strengthens us as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church to continue Christ’s work on earth. We look beyond the veil of this earthly life to our final destiny together with the communion of saints to live in union with God.

The Creed thus synthesizes and reconfirms our communal commitment as disciples of Christ. It is not only that we reject a life of sin, but also that we recommit ourselves to making the Kingdom of God more of a reality in our lives each week. It provides the foundation and framework of a loving God to guide the catechetical work of the Church. “Quite early on, the name **catechesis** was given to the totality of the Church’s efforts to make disciples, to help men believe that Jesus is the Son of God so that believing they might have life in his name, and to educate and instruct them in this life, thus building up the body of Christ” [CCC:4]. “The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch with, but also in communion and intimacy with Jesus Christ” [GDC, 80].

A. The Baptismal Catechumenate

The Baptismal catechumenate, which is the responsibility of the entire Christian community, serves as the inspiration for catechesis in the Church [GDC, 90]. The formation of disciples of Jesus Christ is a lifelong process involving a commitment by all the baptized [see the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, RCIA section, pg. 26].

“**Catechesis is an essentially ecclesial act**” – an action of the Church [NDC, 19C, p.56]. Jesus is the sacrament of the human encounter with God; the Church is the sacrament of the human encounter with the living Spirit of Jesus. **The primary agent of catechesis is not any individual catechist.** The agent of catechesis is the Church animated by the Holy Spirit [GDC, 77]. The Church is “the origin, locus, and means of catechesis. It is a responsibility of the entire community to be a visible place of faith witness” [*Ad Gentes* 14, GDC 35, CT 24]. “It should not be overlooked that the recipient of catechesis is the whole Christian community and every person in it” [GDC, 168].

B. The Two Stages of Christian Discipleship: Initiatory & Ongoing Catechesis

As a Catholic Christian, we respond to God's invitation of love through two primary stages. The first involves **initiatory catechesis**, a comprehensive and systematic formation in the faith that includes more than instruction: it is an apprenticeship of the entire Christian life. It is an "essential moment" in the process of evangelization. It is a 'complete Christian initiation,' which promotes an authentic following of Christ, focused on his Person; it implies education in knowledge of the faith and in the life of faith, in such a manner that the entire person, at his deepest levels, feels enriched by the word of God [GDC, 67].

Whether after the completion of the Baptismal Catechumenate or after being initiated fully through a gradual process of formation in the early years of life, our faith as disciples must be continuously nourished. It is through this second stage of discipleship that **ongoing catechesis** provides opportunities for continuing conversion and ongoing formation. Such continuing conversion and ongoing formation are the responsibility of the whole Catholic community and occur most fruitfully within the community. Ongoing catechesis is a "lifelong process for the individual and a constant and concerted pastoral activity of the Christian community" [NDC, 32]. "The most effective forms of this lifelong catechesis involves the study and praying of Sacred Scripture, a systematic catechesis that gradually leads people deeper into their relationship with Jesus because they grow in their understanding of who he is and what he has done for us, liturgical and sacramental catechesis, initiatives of spiritual formation, and thorough examination of the Church's social teachings" [NDC, 19E, p.59]. The Church refers to this fullness of its catechetical efforts as the six tasks of catechesis.

C. The Six Tasks of Catechesis

The tradition of the Church includes several distinct but interdependent catechetical tasks which inform and reinforce each other. Parish leadership must integrate these fundamental tasks of catechesis [GDC, 85-86]. "When catechesis omits one of these elements, the Christian faith does not attain full development" [GDC, 87].

The six tasks of catechesis are

1. liturgical education: meaningful rites, symbols, biblical and liturgical signs
2. promoting a deeper knowledge and understanding of Sacred Scripture and Tradition
3. moral teaching and witness
4. a life of prayer
5. education for community life
6. missionary initiation with works of charity and social justice

III. Adult Catechesis is the Axis for All Catechesis

The catechesis of adults...is the principle form of catechesis, because it is addressed to persons who have the greatest responsibilities and the capacity to live the Christian message in its fully developed form [Catechesi Tradendae, 43]. Adult catechesis should be the "organizing principle, which gives coherence to the various catechetical programs offered by a particular Church... This is the axis around which revolves the catechesis of childhood and adolescence as well as that of old age..." [GDC, 275]. Adult catechesis fosters this discipleship by providing "a comprehensive and systematic presentation and exploration of the core elements of Catholic faith and practice – a complete initiation into a Catholic way of life" [*Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*, 65].

Adolescent Catechesis and Comprehensive Youth Ministry

Children and adolescent catechesis is foundational in forming mature, adult disciples.

Catechesis in the high school years best prepares young disciples through **comprehensive youth ministry** which includes ongoing, systematic and Confirmation sacramental catechesis.

It is within the context of Christian community that the Church has established the following goals for ministry with adolescents:

1. to empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today.
2. to draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the Catholic community.
3. to foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person.

[Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry, 1997].

IV. Systematic and Sacramental Catechesis

- There is both a unique distinction and essential relationship between systematic and sacramental catechesis in the formation of Christian disciples.

1. Systematic catechesis involves a gradual maturity in discipleship through intentional formation in knowledge of the faith [Scripture and Sacred Tradition], prayer, liturgical life, moral interactions, communal belonging, and missionary spirit [GDC, 87]. Jesus is ultimately the one who invites, instructs, gives witness to, prays with, guides, sends, and mentors the disciple. Systematic catechesis involves an individual's deepening relationship with the person of Jesus through Scripture, the Body of Christ (the Church), her Sacred Tradition and her essential beliefs, practices, and attitudes.

All previously catechized and uncatechized high school age persons should participate in ongoing, **systematic catechesis**. This includes the four pillars of the Church found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church: Creed, Morality, Sacraments, and Prayer. **Participation in systematic catechesis** can occur through Catholic high school theology courses, parish catechetical programs, or homeschooling efforts.

2. Liturgical and sacramental catechesis focuses its attention on the rite itself – the word of God, the symbols, the symbolic actions, and the prayer texts. Our beliefs and practices are embedded in and emerge from the liturgy. **Sacramental catechesis**, guided by the love of God within the community of faith, should provide opportunities for the disciple to deepen his or her awareness of God's special grace, in both his or her life and the life of the worshipping community, and to respond more fully to it individually and with other members of the Body of Christ.

Whereas systematic catechesis can take place in the parish, Catholic school, or at home, **immediate focused sacramental preparation for Confirmation should be offered in parishes because the parish is the ecclesial locus for sacraments**. The parish, while recognizing the richness of the theological study and service that takes place in Catholic schools or in the home, serves as the center for sacramental catechesis.

A. General Principles for Sacramental Catechesis [NDC, 35, B]

- The National Directory for Catechesis [NDC, 2005] developed by the USCCB provides the guiding catechetical framework for the Catholic Church in the United States.

Dioceses and parishes should present sacramental catechesis that

- Is a comprehensive and systematic formation in the faith, one that integrates knowledge of the 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 mystagogia following the celebration

B. Confirmation Catechesis

Preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation is grounded in the Church's understanding that 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 [CCC: 1285].

Sacramental Catechesis for Confirmation [NDC, 36, A. 2]

Dioceses and parishes should present catechesis for the Sacrament of Confirmation that

- Teaches that Confirmation increases and deepens the grace of baptism, imprinting an indelible character on the soul
- Teaches that Confirmation strengthens the baptismal conferral of the Holy Spirit on those confirmed in order to incorporate them more firmly in Christ, strengthen their bond with the Church, associate them more closely with the Church's mission, increase in them the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and help them bear witness to the Christian faith in words and deeds.
- Teaches about the role of the Holy Spirit, his gifts, and his fruits
- Is developmentally appropriate and includes retreat experiences
- Includes instruction on the Rite of Confirmation and its basic symbols: the imposition of hands, the anointing with Sacred Chrism, and the words of the sacramental formula.
- Ensures that parents and sponsors are involved in the catechetical preparation of the children for Confirmation
- Teaches that the bishop is the ordinary minister of the Sacrament of Confirmation (in the Eastern Churches, however, the priest is the ordinary minister of Chrismation)

V. Canons on Catechesis from Canon Law

The following canons establish the ecclesial authority for catechetics in the Church. Specific canons for Confirmation are included throughout the Guidelines.

- It is a proper and grave duty especially of pastors of souls to take care of the catechesis of the Christian people so that the living of the faithful becomes manifest and active through doctrinal instruction and the experience of Christian life [Canon 773].
- Having observed the prescripts issued by the Apostolic See, it is for the diocesan bishop to issue norms for catechetics, to make provision that suitable instruments of catechesis are available, even by preparing a catechism if it seems opportune, and to foster and co-ordinate catechetical endeavors [Canon 775].
- Attentive to the norms established by the diocesan bishop, a pastor is to take care in a special way:
 - 1° that suitable catechesis is imparted for the celebration of the sacraments
 - 2° that through catechetical instruction imparted for an appropriate period of time children are properly prepared for the first reception of the sacraments of penance and the Most Holy Eucharist and for the sacrament of confirmation
 - 5° that the faith of youth and adults is strengthened, enlightened, and developed through various means and endeavors [Canon 777].

- Catechetical instruction is to be given by using all helps, teaching aids, and instruments of social communication which seem more effective so that the faithful, in a manner adapted to their character, capabilities and age, and conditions of life, are able to learn the Catholic doctrine more fully and put it into practice more suitably [Canon 779].
- Local ordinaries are to take care that catechists are duly prepared to fulfill their function properly, namely, that continuing formation is made available to them, that they understand the doctrine of the Church appropriately, and that they learn in theory and in practice the methods proper to the teaching disciplines [Canon 780].

THEOLOGY

THE UNITY OF THE INITIATION SACRAMENTS: BAPTISM, CONFIRMATION, EUCHARIST

“Christian initiation is celebrated in Baptism, Confirmation or Chrismation, and Eucharist. These sacraments are efficacious signs of God’s love and stages of a person’s journey toward communion with the Trinity” [NDC, 36]. 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 [CCC: 1285]. Confirmation more fully personalizes the gift of the Spirit so that the Spirit is manifested through action in love and service.

“Through these sacraments, a person is incorporated into the Church, is strengthened for participation in the Church’s mission, and is welcomed to partake of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ” [NDC, 36]. A Trinitarian understanding of sacraments essentially reflects how God within the distinct and diverse Persons of the Trinity generates a loving unity or communion of Persons and invites us to participate in this loving union with God. This Trinitarian love creates, redeems, and sanctifies the world through Christ’s instrument for building the Kingdom of God, the Church. The Church, a living body of members, is founded and nourished by Jesus Christ, the head [CCC: 787, 792].

Within the context of God’s loving initiative and human freedom to respond, there is a unity among the initiation sacraments.

- In Baptism, God gives eternal life and restores a person from darkness and isolation into the light and right relationship with God and the Church.
- In Confirmation, God seals this relationship with the strength needed to live out the calling to build God’s Kingdom as a disciple of Jesus within the Body of Christ.
- In Eucharist, God sustains the baptized with his sacrificial love which nourishes ongoing conversion for building communities of faith and the Kingdom of God [CCC: 1396].

SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATION

In the Old Testament the prophets announced that the Spirit of the Lord would rest on the hoped-for Messiah for his saving mission. The Catechism of the Catholic Church describes the integral relationship of the Holy Spirit in the life and mission of Jesus. “He was conceived of the Holy Spirit; his whole life and his whole mission are carried out in total communion with the Holy Spirit whom the Father gives him ‘without measure’ ” [CCC: 1286]. The descent of the Holy Spirit on Jesus at his baptism by John was the sign that this was he who was to come, the Messiah, the Son of God.

Christ promised the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, fulfilled first on Easter Sunday and later on Pentecost. “Filled with the Holy Spirit the apostles began to proclaim ‘the mighty works of God’, and Peter declared this outpouring of the Spirit to be the sign of the messianic age. Those who believed in the apostolic preaching and were baptized received the gift of the Holy Spirit in their turn” [CCC: 1287].

Pentecost is focused on the activity of conversion – repentance, forgiveness, and a changed lifestyle. It incorporates this process of change within the community of faith. Pentecost continues the story of faith by fulfilling Jesus’ promise to send the Holy Spirit to enter the frailty of a community of believers’ hearts who desire to know, love, and serve Jesus more faithfully. The Spirit arouses the power of God’s love, manifested through gifts, which unites the common bonds of human hearts. The Spirit generates boldness within the

believers to respond to their Lord and Savior's command to "spread the Good News throughout the world." It is the entire community of faith that comes alive with the Spirit in order to share their unique gifts and to restore the world into communion with its Creator. For it is the Holy Spirit which unites people in the saving action of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Through this saving action, the Holy Spirit enables a person within his community of faith to be freed from the bonds of sin and death in order to live a life of love

CONFIRMATION AS FREE GIFT FROM GOD

Confirmation is a gift of the Spirit which confirms our belonging to Christ in Baptism and which calls us to be witnesses of Christ's love for others. Fundamentally, the grace of the Holy Spirit is offered to us through the Church. It is God's initiating activity which invites a free and intentional response. The first Christians saw Baptism as an image of living faith, the Spirit present in Jesus' anointing as the Father's chosen one, as driving Jesus into the desert, blessing him with prophetic gifts, empowering him with signs and wonders, offering him up for death and raising him from the dead. The same Spirit completes Christ's Lordship within believers. Through Christ's invitation to us as disciples, we are called to prepare ourselves for the life of the Spirit [to carry on the mission of Jesus in the world]. We are a people blessed, anointed, and gifted by God to generate the Kingdom of God. Although the gift of the Spirit involves a powerful personal experience, it is not viewed as an emotional or private experience. The purpose of the gift of the Spirit involves uniting people together as brothers and sisters in Christ to serve one another in a world longing for hope and peace.

THE RITE OF CONFIRMATION

The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains: "From that time on the apostles, in fulfillment of Christ's will, imparted to the newly baptized by the laying on of hands the gift of the Spirit that completes the grace of Baptism...The imposition of hands is rightly recognized as the origin of the sacrament of Confirmation, which in a certain way perpetuates the grace of Pentecost in the Church" [CCC: 1288]. The Catechism notes: "Very early [in the life of the Church], the better to signify the gift of the Holy Spirit, an anointing with perfumed oil [chrism] was added to the laying on of hands. This anointing highlights the name "Christian" which means "anointed" and derives from that of Christ himself whom God "anointed with the Holy Spirit."... **In the West, the term Confirmation suggests that this sacrament both confirms Baptism and strengthens baptismal grace**" [CCC: 1289].

By Confirmation, Christians [those who are anointed] share more completely in the mission of Jesus Christ and the fullness of the Holy Spirit with which he is filled, so that lives may give off "the aroma of Christ." [1294]. It is the anointing by the bishop who confers the mark or seal of the Holy Spirit. "A seal is a symbol of a person, a sign of personal authority, or ownership of an object" [CCC: 1295]. It is Christ who declares that he was marked with his Father's seal. This seal for Christians expresses that "'It is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has commissioned us; he has put a seal on us and has given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.' This seal of the Holy Spirit marks our total belonging to Christ, our enrollment in his service for ever, as well as the promise of divine protection in the great eschatological trial" [1296]. This onetime sealing of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation is a gift which fosters a continual renewal of the person and the Church itself.

- *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* [Additional references, see CCC:1067-1091; 1111-1129; 1212-1213;1265-1303].
- *Models of Confirmation and Baptismal Affirmation*, Robert L. Browning and Roy A. Reed, Religious Education Press, Birmingham, AL, 1995.
- *The Sacraments*, Readings in Contemporary Theology, Michael J. Taylor, S.J., Editor, Alba House, New York, 1981.

HISTORY OF CONFIRMATION

The experience of the early Church was sacramental, even before they began to articulate this experience as being encapsulated in distinct Sacraments. Inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit, through ritual and symbol, in active remembering and participation, the community of believers encountered the living Christ still present among them drawing them to the Father. These sacramental encounters helped create the awareness that the love of God-Who-Is-Love is full of life-giving power. In the power of the Spirit, remembering the words and deeds of Jesus, the believer was brought into present contact with him in a personal encounter. At the same time, these were communal celebrations that served to remind them of who they were as a community of faith and thus served to form the identity not only of the individual but also of the Church. Jesus' ministry begins with his own baptism in water and Spirit. The risen Christ bestows the gift of the Spirit upon the Church. This Spirit was as intimately related to Jesus as his own breathing [John 20:22] and at the same time proceeds from the Father as the spirit of truth and abiding presence [John 15:26-16:13]. This Spirit is called the Paraclete – one who advocates, exhorts, comforts, and guides. To become Christian followers of the Way, was to be baptized into the name of Jesus [Acts 2:38] and become a people of this Spirit.

For St. Paul, having the Spirit is the *sine qua non* of Christian life. "You are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you: Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him" [Romans 8:9]. Since having the Spirit is an irrepressible liveliness of Christian identity, it is unthinkable that the activity of Christians in initiating new followers of Christ could fail to be a celebration of the Gift of the Spirit. Becoming a Christian means becoming united to Christ. Paul states that "anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him" [Corinthians 7:17]. All who are baptized are baptized into Jesus' life, into his baptism, and all are gifted with the Spirit and led by the Spirit. The addition of Jesus' name and Spirit's blessing to John's baptism were momentous. The addition of the Spirit creates a people with a special blessing, a people gifted with power "from above", and power deep within, which creates new life. It generates gifts for specific tasks in the Church and in the world. The Holy Spirit was not doctrine for the early Christians but a powerful personal experience. It was personal not so much as private emotion, but as tasks, ministries, different works to be done [1 Corinthians 12]; as insights, illuminations, and the urgings of prayer [Romans 8, Letters of John]; and as attributes of character [Galatians 5]. Such gifts were experienced as available, divine given power, to be discerned and developed. The Holy Spirit was experienced as both among and within, uniting the baptized as brothers and sisters in Christ.

The understanding of Confirmation is rooted in the New Testament stories about the gift of the Holy Spirit coming into the lives of those who responded to God's good news in Jesus and in the symbolization of this gift or the gesture which conveyed it in the laying on of hands described by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles. Acts 9 describes how Paul received the gift of the Holy Spirit when Ananias laid hands upon him. Paul then was baptized. Paul encounters Christ and receives the Holy Spirit as a prelude to baptism. In the description of Pentecost in Acts 2, a different sequence is indicated. Believers are exhorted to repent and be baptized so that then they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Another pattern is described in Acts 8 when the apostle Philip had preached, healed, and baptized many Samaritans. Apostles from Jerusalem heard about the Samaritans' baptism in Jesus, and that they had not yet received the Holy Spirit. So Peter and John "laid hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit" [Acts 8:17]. Note that it is the apostles who are laying hands. Their laying of hands symbolizes unity within the Church. St. Ireneaus said, "Where the Church is, there is the Holy Spirit and the fullness of grace." To be one with the bishop, is to be one with the Church, is to have a share in the Holy Spirit and the divine life of God. Also, Scripture describes the anointing occurring in different ways, a much-cited precedent in the Western Church. Baptism is here thought to be incomplete without the laying on of hands. In Acts 19, the laying on of hands occurs directly following baptism where Paul encounters disciples in Corinth who understood themselves to have been baptized into John's baptism. Paul baptizes "in the name of Jesus". He laid his hands upon them and they received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Thus, even in Acts, the

primary scriptural source for understanding Confirmation, there are various instances in the application of this postbaptismal anointing.

CONFIRMATION did not appear to be distinguished from Baptism as a separate sacrament before 200 A.D. After a long and arduous catechumenate period as a candidate [up to 3 years], the early adult convert was fully initiated at the Easter Vigil. As he/she emerged from the waters of Baptism to receive the white garment, he/she entered the church, and received the imposition of hands by the bishop while praying for the Holy Spirit and the gifts. After being anointed with oil, the person proceeded to participation in the Eucharist.

Outside the New Testament, pieces of a picture of Christian initiation take shape in the second century. In the year 180, Theophilus of Antioch wrote: "We, therefore, are called Christians on this account, because we are anointed with the holy oil of God." In the third century from many sources, Tertullian, among others, an image begins to take shape, not of separate rites, but of one rite of baptism involving separate parts, water-bath and chrism. The Roman pattern is seen in Hippolytus' Apostolic Tradition when the postbaptismal rite is completed by the Bishop when he lays on his hands, anoints and seals the forehead.

During the reigns of Constantine [313 A.D.] and Theodosius [380 A.D.] when the persecution of the Church officially ended, a new wave of converts entered the Church. The rapid and vast expansion of the church, and the practice of baptizing infants, required the function of baptizing to be extended to presbyters. Priests continued to baptize and provide Eucharist. Bishops, who could no longer be present at most baptisms due to sheer numbers of baptized as well as geographical distances, chose to reserve to themselves some role in the initiation rite.

By the 5th century there evolved two celebrations for infants: one involving Baptism with the infant being immersed in the love of its community and the other involving receiving the special gift of the Holy Spirit. The term Confirmation was first used by the French Council of Riez/Orange in 439 and 441 to refer to the post-baptismal laying of hands. Bishop Faustus of Riez in 460 stressed the importance of episcopal confirmation, claiming it made those who received it more fully Christian. He said that Confirmation imparted an additional strengthening over its gift in Baptism, where the Spirit was first imparted. Pope Innocent I in 416 sets out the rule in a letter to Bishop Gubbio, Presbyters may anoint the baptized with chrism but they are not to anoint the brow with the oil, for that is reserved to the bishops themselves when they delivered the Spirit of the Paraclete.

Two separate traditions developed in the East and West.

Anointing by the bishops was chiefly a tradition in the Western Church, not practiced in the East, where the water-bath of Baptism, the anointing and consignation, and Eucharist remained part of the initiation liturgy. It spread gradually in the West and by mid fifth century needed some theological explanation both to justify its separation from Baptism and to support its necessity and desirability. In the West the desire to reserve the completion of Baptism to the bishop caused the temporal separation of the two sacraments. The East has kept them united, so that the priest who baptizes confers Confirmation. But he can do so only with the "myron" consecrated by the bishop [CCC: 1290]. In other words, in the East, the priest could stand in the place of the bishop because the bishop was represented by the oil that he had consecrated. **The practice of the Eastern Churches gives greater emphasis to the unity of Christian initiation. That of the Latin Church more clearly expresses the communion of the new Christian with the bishop as guarantor and servant of the unity, catholicity and apostolicity of his Church, and hence the connection with the apostolic origins of Christ's Church [CCC: 1292].**

By 1000 A.D. the rite of Confirmation had achieved an independent status as a sacrament performed by a bishop, done once, whose main feature was consignation with chrism. By the 13th century Baptism and Confirmation were completely separated in ritual as well as in theology. The split among Baptism,

Confirmation, and Eucharist was further widened as Eucharist gradually was separated from Baptism and Confirmation. In 1215 the Fourth Lateran Council declared that communion was not obligatory for children until they reached years of discretion. In 1274 at the Second Council of Lyons, Confirmation was named one of the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church. The Council's justification was that Confirmation was the gift of the Holy Spirit and could only be administered by the bishop who represented the universal church.

The medieval theology and practice of Confirmation was codified at the Council of Florence in 1439 which let Christians know finally and officially that in Confirmation Christians grow in grace and are strengthened in faith. In the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas presented a systematic theological defense of Confirmation as a sacrament which, like Baptism and Orders, imprints a character which is a "certain kind of participation in the priesthood of Christ". This view was reinforced in the Council of Trent [1545-1663] and in many other statements until Vatican II where there was a recognition that confirmation was one part of the whole Christian initiation. The Council of Trent did not add any new understanding of Confirmation but determined that reception of it should occur sometime after age 7 but before age 12. It was determined that children under age 7 could not understand the sacrament nor would they be able to remember the ceremony.

Between Trent and the Vatican Council II [1962-65] the only changes occurred in the order designated in which the sacraments should be received. In 1910, Pope Pius X, who had a great devotion to the Eucharist, encouraged frequent reception, as had the Church for centuries (e.g. IV Lateran in 1215). He promoted the Eucharist to be received as young as possible to help gain special help and closeness to the Lord. The effect of this generated a pastoral practice to celebrate first Eucharist before Confirmation.

The Second Vatican Council's "Decree on Confirmation" stressed more clearly the unity of the three sacraments of initiation as well as the special strength granted in Confirmation. It did not specify a certain age for its reception, "the administration of Confirmation is generally postponed until about the 7th year. For pastoral reasons, however, episcopal conferences may choose an age more appropriate, so that the sacrament is given at a more mature age after appropriate formation."

The Age for Confirmation

The sacrament of Confirmation is to be conferred on the faithful at about the age of discretion unless the conference of bishops has determined another age, or there is danger of death, or in the judgment of the minister a grave cause suggests otherwise [Canon 891].

Currently, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, with the approval of the Vatican (July 2002), has established the norm that Confirmation should ordinarily be conferred "between the ages of discretion (age 7) and about 16 years of age among Latin-rite Catholics in the United States".

It is the current practice in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston to offer immediate preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation sometime during the tenth or eleventh grade. This age seems to provide an ideal time for adolescents to develop a more conscious awareness and response to their baptismal call to live more faithfully as disciples of Jesus as well as to establish a firmer foundation for understanding and living their faith.

Persons, who because of developmental or mental disabilities may never attain the use of reason, are to be encouraged either directly [e.g. by the Confirmation coordinator] or, if necessary, through their parents or guardian, to receive the sacrament of Confirmation at the appropriate time [USCCB Guidelines 16, 1995].

- *The Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994.*

- *Confirmation: "The Baby in Solomon's Court"*, Paul Turner, Paulist Press, New York, 1993.
- *Models of Confirmation and Baptismal Affirmation*, Robert L. Browning and Roy A. Reed, Religious Education Press, Birmingham, AL, 1995.
- *New Dictionary of Theology.*, Joseph A Kromonchack et al. Michael Glazier, Wilmington, Delaware, 1989.

FOUR FORMATION COMPONENTS OF SACRAMENTAL LIFE

“...Confirmation is necessary for the completion of Baptism grace” [Cf. Roman Ritual, Rite of Confirmation (OC), Introduction 1]. 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...” [LG 11; OC Introduction 2]. Just as a parent loves his or her child differently but continuously throughout the child’s life, so too by the grace of one’s Baptism, one must continuously nurture the gift of God’s love to us. In order to appreciate better how a person and his community of faith can cooperate with God’s sacramental grace in everyday life, the following schema illustrates the four components of sacramental life with the development of a child.

- 1. FOUNDATIONAL FORMATION**
- 2. IMMEDIATE FORMATION**
- 3. THE RITE OR CELEBRATION**
- 4. POST-CELEBRATION: MYSTAGOGIA & ONGOING FORMATION**

1. FOUNDATIONAL FORMATION

The parent first directs his or her love for the infant by providing unconditional care, safety, and nurturance of the child to establish a sense of trust and security. As the child develops the parent gradually begins to call forth a response of love. He encourages the child to feed and dress himself gradually assuming greater measures of independence, interdependence and personal and family responsibility. The parent teaches the child how to respond to the gifts of the Holy Spirit received in Baptism by sharing parental faith through example and teaching, patiently and consistently offering correction and affirmation. For example, the parent may teach the 5-year-old how to use God’s gift of “Counsel” by praying before decision making. He may teach how to respond to the gift of “Awe and Respect” by helping the child to give thanks for God’s daily care of his needs. The parent may model what it means to serve as Jesus serves by sharing his resources with those in need or, for example, by taking the child to visit those in nursing homes. In this way the parent directs the child in the development of mature love. The Church calls this foundational formation. The child is fed spiritual milk rather than meat for his or her faith at this stage so that he or she might acquire a gradual taste for the Christian way of life and begin to experience living as a disciple of Jesus. This approach involves an intentional understanding and application of one’s faith by one’s parents. That is why parental [adult] formation and communal involvement are essential to support the parent[s] in their primary role as first educator of the child. For it is in the context of human relationship that the child begins to experience relationship with his Trinitarian God as Father, Savior, and Advocate.

As a child develops, it is important that the parent work in partnership with the parish community to provide ongoing, systematic catechesis which complements the faith and experiences of God’s love in the home. This can be fostered through parish grade-level catechetical programs, Catholic school education, or through home-schooling efforts. In this way, the child begins to develop a growing familiarity with the Christian way of life. As the child matures the parent can spend more intentional moments of guidance and direction. The parent may begin to help the child think critically about the kinds of television programs, movies, music, or advertising that impacts his or her daily choices. In this way the child is gradually prepared to assume the responsibilities and accept the calling and challenge of love presented in many shapes and forms in the adolescent and young adult years.

2. IMMEDIATE FORMATION

Immediate] 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 – his actions, his gifts, and his biddings – in order to be more capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities of Christian life. [Cf. OC Introduction 3; CCC 1309].

For adolescents, immediate preparation should include use of USCCB conformity texts for Confirmation sacramental catechesis. The current sacramental texts consist of 6-9 sessions. **The sacramental catechetical sessions in conjunction with retreats, service, parent, sponsor, and community involvement require one catechetical year when done within comprehensive youth ministry.** This number of suggested sessions reflects the time needed to cover the learner outcomes for Confirmation preparation (see “Confirmation Catechesis” learner outcomes for immediate preparation). Separate but concurrent and ongoing, systematic catechesis should also be taking place. Catechesis does not begin or end during sacramental preparation because it involves a lifelong process of deepening one’s love relationship with God and the people of God.

If a faith foundation is in place, then Confirmation formation in the adolescent years invites, encourages, and prepares the teen to deepen his relationship with Christ as well as guides the young person in recognizing the presence and promptings of the Holy Spirit more closely in his or her daily life. This involves immediate preparation for the sacrament. **The parent** may help the adolescent develop usage of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (e.g. Wisdom in discerning Christian values with media messages so that the teen can begin to discern how to love in his or her daily choices with his siblings, in school, in the neighborhood or larger world). **The sponsor** acts as a representative of the parish community in his or her relationship with the confirmand. The Confirmation coordinator or catechist plays a more specific role with the confirmand as well, but every member of the parish community must also assume some role in the faith life of the adolescent.

The experience of retreats offers the opportunity for extended time to develop a sense of community not ordinarily afforded by brief formal catechetical gatherings. The necessity for retreats models “extended time of prayer and reflection” as an example which Jesus himself taught in forming disciples as a community of faith [Mark 6:30-32]. Retreats lay the foundation for the adult life of periodic personal and communal times of prayer, reflection, and discernment. It also affords an excellent opportunity to offer the sacrament of Reconciliation.

During this period, it is the responsibility of the parish to provide young people and their parents, families, and godparents appropriate information on Archdiocesan guidelines and specific parish requirements for the process of immediate preparation for the sacrament as well as for post-Confirmation opportunities for continued growth in their faith formation.

Community participation is essential in encouraging **service efforts** and ministry as a natural continuation of earlier works of stewardship. It is the community itself which must be actively engaged in service and ministry, e.g. assist with parish social ministries, serve as a catechist, assist as a liturgical minister. This fosters a community or “culture” whereby the adolescent disciples see this as the Christian way of life rather than a requirement to be fulfilled. The goal is the strengthening and development of loving, committed, contributing adult members of the community rather than participation in service “Projects” which connote a sense of completing something with an ending. The service must also entail a critical reflection on these experiences in light of how Jesus calls us as disciples to serve and treat “the least of these as brothers and sisters” in everyday life [Matthew 25:40].

Apprenticeships, practicums, work placements, and ongoing catechesis [e.g. Scripture studies, small faith communities for prayer and service] all afford the young adult a gradual and supervised transition into the adult world. This may challenge the fully initiated faith community to examine its own commitment to grow in these areas with ongoing, systematic catechesis an essential part of lifelong faith formation.

Please note that programs or models which do not reflect ongoing catechesis within youth ministry may require longer periods in order to prepare adequately the adolescent within his community of faith for the sacrament of Confirmation. Where a baptized adolescent member has had minimal or non-existent participation in foundational formation, it is critical that the parish community in cooperation with the individual's family provide such opportunities. This effort may reflect more of a missionary flavor in order to engage the young person deeper in his or her relationship with Christ and the parish community. Strengthening or renewing the young person's faith foundation through community building or systematic catechesis may be needed before immediate preparation of the sacrament takes place. A minimum of a year's participation in such programs or processes approved by a parish provide the necessary groundwork for deeper, conscious choices in developing as a disciple.

3. THE RITE OR CELEBRATION

The grace of the sacrament of Confirmation involves a dynamic strengthening of the gifts of Holy Spirit within the confirmand in relationship to the welcoming parish community. They collectively are called to live more faithfully and to love more abundantly as disciples in their daily lives. The symbols and ritual itself are transforming sources of catechesis within themselves.

4. POST-CELEBRATION: MYSTAGOGIA & ONGOING FORMATION

Post-confirmation is really a continuation of ongoing faith formation. This transitional stage should foster the building of intentional formation bridges to advance the young person in his or her development towards becoming a mature, committed adult in a parish community.

Post-confirmation should include a distinct period called mystagogia which, properly speaking, is a study or unpacking of the mysteries of the sacrament as opposed to catechesis, which is an informing of experience in light of the Gospel, salvation history, and the teachings of the Church. See the Post-Confirmation section for practical suggestions how to do this.

Framework adapted from *Confirmed in a Faithful Community*, St. Mary's Press, Winona, Minnesota, 2007.

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, 5º, 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, 4º].

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.

THE CANDIDATES

INVITATION TO CONFIRMATION PREPARATION

Parishes should invite young people to consider completion of their initiation through enrollment in Confirmation catechesis. This invitation can be extended personally through the catechetical leaders to the “baptized but not confirmed” 10th or 11th grader or through a letter, parish bulletin announcements or a sign-up time following Sunday Masses.

INITIAL INTERVIEWS

At registration, an interview by a Confirmation team member should be scheduled to:

- ensure that qualifications are met
- offer an overview of the meaning of Confirmation, the value of formation and reception of the sacrament during this time in their lives
- assess interest and willingness to participate
- give your parish requirements for participation, such as attendance requirements, time commitments, service projects, ministry participation, retreats and community involvement
- give out the schedule for all required sessions; if dates are known well in advance it can prevent conflicts in work schedules and school functions
- give assurance of prayers and support from the community

The interview should be a prayerful and caring experience enabling the young person to clarify his/her reasons for wanting to be confirmed and determining if this is the best time to begin Confirmation preparation catechesis.

To assist in the interview process, a questionnaire could be given to the young persons at registration. It could be completed by the candidate and brought to the interview.

Confirmation Interview Candidate Assessment

Candidate assessment tools can be helpful guides to assist the candidate as well as the adult Confirmation team member in a process of ongoing faith formation. It offers an inviting opportunity to examine more objectively the candidate's faith life and to make adjustments when necessary. This serves a different objective than developing exams which are used as litmus tests for determining whether a candidate should or should not be confirmed. Unwittingly, a final pre-Confirmation exam can contribute to perpetuating the attitude of the completion or graduation from faith formation which parishes are trying to avoid. Young people should be challenged to have a clear and articulate understanding of their faith. They should be prepared adequately for responding to God's invitation and encounter in the sacrament of Confirmation. They should be encouraged to continue in their faith formation with ongoing systematic catechesis.

One suggestion is to begin immediate preparation for Confirmation by utilizing an interpersonal conversation between Confirmation adult team members and the candidate to better understand his/her relationship with God and his/her understanding and practice of the Catholic faith. This method essentially serves to establish a baseline at the beginning of immediate preparation for Confirmation to examine where the candidate is on his or her journey of faith. The interview process then can be repeated just prior to the Rite of Confirmation. When this same assessment is repeated it can provide some measure of growth and feedback to both the candidate and to the adult team members. Profiles for both the individual candidate and larger group can be made to identify and address areas of strengths and weaknesses during the formation process. For example, more time or attention may be devoted to learning Scripture if candidates appear deficient in this area.

For the interview itself, the assessment tool can act as a discussion starter between the candidate and adult team member. It can serve as a means for the adult to affirm areas of growth while offering more specific direction to the young person in ongoing faith formation. It can serve as a guide, with the candidate's permission, to help the candidate's sponsor intentionally guide the candidate in areas of personal and communal faith formation. As an alternative or as a complementary piece to the candidate interview, request that the parent and/or sponsor write a letter attesting to the growth witnessed by the parent/sponsor as testimony which can be shared with the candidate.

For persons with cognitive disabilities, interviews before and after Confirmation may not be warranted. The sacrament is founded on belonging to a community of faith that engages in relationships based on the ability to love and to be loved. The bishop confers that formal sense of belonging by and through the gift of the Holy Spirit. A person with a developmental disability who can relate to others in his community [e.g. family or other parish members], receive a blessing, sustain a face-to-face encounter with the bishop and who can demonstrate the ability to love others are encouraged to receive the sacrament of Confirmation.

For persons with multiple and/or severe disabilities, the sacraments of initiation should be conferred, if in doubt, based on the faith of the family or parish community.

See the Resource section for the following examples:

1. Pre-Confirmation catechesis interview
2. Post-Confirmation catechesis interview
3. Candidate Inscription pledge or commitment to participate in formation.

PARISH READINESS FOR IMMEDIATE CONFIRMATION FORMATION

In light of the GDC's [90] emphasis that the entire Christian community is responsible for initiating the candidate into the Christian way of life, it is critical that the community discerns how well it is prepared for this task before engaging the Confirmation candidate in sacramental formation. The following questions serve to encourage each parish to reflect upon its own faithful witness to Christian discipleship before inviting young people into sacramental preparation for Confirmation.

1. What do we want to happen to our candidates as a result of their participation in this catechesis? How is our faith community prepared to involve fully initiated adolescents in parish life?
2. What are our goals? Are these realistic in the light of the age and abilities of the candidates? Are persons with disabilities encouraged to receive the sacrament of Confirmation no matter what their physical or mental ability?
3. Do our young people feel welcomed in the parish and at the Sunday Masses? How are their spiritual needs met?
4. How is the faith of parents and adults fostered? What is the quality of their faith as witnessed to youth?
5. What are the specific strengths, needs, issues and problems which affect the religious formation of youth? Are the culture and values of youth considered?
6. What is the understanding of catechesis and youth ministry on the part of those persons responsible for this ministry?
7. How are the leadership skills of youth developed? Are there opportunities for them to perform meaningful roles within the parish?
8. Is our overall catechetical program strong enough that our Confirmation catechesis can concentrate on actual spiritual formation for the sacrament?
9. How does the schedule fit with home, school and other parish activities?
10. How are we, as a community of faith, inviting, guiding, encouraging, and mentoring the young person with his or her unique gifts and talents into the life of this parish community?"
11. What kind of time and resources are we, as adults, willing to share with these candidates?
12. How are we witnessing to the Christian way of life by our own ongoing formation and example? That is, how can each of us fully initiated members of this parish community be sign and symbol to generate and incarnate the fire of Pentecost in this faith community?
13. How do we as a community reflect Christ's example of charity, service, and justice to our marginalized brothers and sisters?

14. How do we express and celebrate our joys, our losses, our faithfulness, and our need for forgiveness with each other from our faith traditions? Do we insist that what was good enough for us as children should be the same thing given to our children or are we open to modifying the expressions of values and traditions which reflect the contemporary symbols and hopes of the candidates?
15. How can we pass on stories of faith, traditions, and values to candidates in ways that honor and respect their generation's unique contributions to the community of faith?
16. How are we a people of prayer?
17. How do we share our resources with each other [our time, talents, and treasures]?
18. How do we personalize our beliefs, values, and faith traditions in everyday life?
19. How comfortable are we at sharing who Jesus and the Church are for us with our young people?
20. How committed are we ourselves to the same things that we are asking of our young people?

DEVELOPING THE PARISH COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

When parishioners are made aware of and given the opportunity to be involved in the Confirmation preparation in the parish, they are challenged to look more deeply into their own faith lives. It can be a time of renewal and recommitment for them. The candidates benefit through the Christian experiences and witness that other already initiated Catholics share with them. All should be called forth to witness, teach, encourage, question and pray for the candidates. Confirmation teams might heighten awareness in the following ways:

Refer to the Resource section for practical suggestions on how to engage the community in Confirmation formation. This includes ideas for engaging parents, families, and sponsors.

CONFIRMATION TEAMS/MINISTRIES

Parish Confirmation teams should be carefully selected by the pastor, DRE and/or youth minister. All persons involved in the preparation, celebration and mystagogia should be well trained and familiar with church theology, ecclesial documents on the initiation sacraments, the Rite of Confirmation and the Archdiocesan Confirmation Guidelines. Regarding persons with disabilities, an ideal catechist is one who has special education experience and is also knowledgeable in catechetics. Other persons should have a sensitivity and understanding of persons with disabilities and be willing to make necessary adaptations.

Several ministries are required, working together, to successfully implement the Confirmation preparation process in a parish community.

I. THE PASTOR

The pastor is responsible for all catechesis that takes place in the parish, seeing that preparation for all sacraments is done carefully and completely and as inclusive as possible for parishioners with disabilities [NCCB Guidelines 5]. When possible, he should participate in the activities for candidates, parents and sponsors. He should share the responsibility for teaching classes, doing candidate interviews, leading prayers and giving retreats.

II. CONFIRMATION COORDINATING TEAM

A Confirmation Coordinating Team is recommended to be responsible for planning, coordinating and organizing all stages of the Confirmation preparation process in the parish. The team would recruit, catechize and provide a support community for all those involved in the various ministries. This could consist of: pastor, DRE, coordinator of youth ministry, an overall Confirmation coordinator, liturgy and music coordinator, retreat coordinator and recently (1-2 years) confirmed youth of the parish.

Note: Where a parish liturgy and music coordinator and liturgy committee exists, the Confirmation team should meet with them to discuss ways in which the candidates will be supported by prayer and liturgy as well as in the preparation of liturgical events including the Mass for Confirmation.

A. Confirmation Team Coordinator

The team coordinator should be a faith-filled person who is experienced and knowledgeable in catechesis. They must become thoroughly familiar with the entire program in order to plan and lead all aspects of the process. The leader serves as facilitator and focal point for the rest of the team and a link with the pastoral staff, parents and sponsors. Some specific tasks might be to:

- decide on an overall plan;
- recruit and train other team members, including catechists;
- develop role descriptions for all team members;
- plan and coordinate a schedule of events;
- facilitate team meetings as needed;
- arrange for space and materials to be used;
- maintain communication among all persons involved;
- work with sponsors and parents in fulfilling their roles;
- work with the liturgical/music coordinator to prepare the Confirmation liturgy.
- adapt programs to accommodate persons with disabilities [e.g. cognitive, behavioral, emotional, or physical disabilities].

Basic Competencies for Confirmation Coordinators

The adult Confirmation coordinator will

- develop a basic understanding of Church history & sacramental theology with specific references to various theologies for the sacrament of Confirmation
- understand different paradigms of Confirmation and the Church's pastoral practices
- understand the purpose and use of the Archdiocesan Confirmation Guidelines
- understand and apply principles for designing a Confirmation process
- understand formation for Confirmation in the adolescent years -
 - a. understand adolescent faith development
 - b. be able to develop a Confirmation program within total youth ministry or peer ministry
- understand the key roles for the formation team (catechesis, retreats, liturgy, sponsor/parents, family involvement, service)
- develop a comprehensive Confirmation policy for the parish which includes:
 - foundational catechesis
 - formation (which includes parents, sponsors, and the larger parish community)
 - liturgical celebration (collaboration with the liturgy coordinator where one exists)
 - post-Confirmation (mystagogy, mission & ongoing formation in the Church)
- develop a knowledge of parish resources for Confirmation formation (e.g. the use of sacramental catechetical texts, retreats, meaningful service opportunities which foster the candidate's sense of stewardship, understanding of the rites; familiarity with the use of symbols and rituals)
- prepare the parish faith community for their role in assisting the individual candidate (e.g. see the community involvement section)
- familiarize oneself with references to the Holy Spirit and the Sacrament of Confirmation found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church
- familiarize oneself with the USCCB *Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities* and be able to provide formation adapted to meet specific individual needs
- complete Archdiocesan child protection training and any additional Archdiocesan mandatory training [e.g. retreat training offered by the Office of Youth Ministry]

B. Catechists

At the foundation of any sacramental catechesis is the catechist. Careful attention should be given to their selection and catechetical training. This includes the VIRTUS safe environment program and other mandatory Archdiocesan training [e.g. retreat training]. In addition, there is a special competence needed for those catechists working with persons with disabilities [GDC, 189].

Note: Catechists should be certified as catechists or working toward catechist certification or renewal. Below are some specific areas of competencies which should be considered. Annual formation for confirmation catechists is offered by the Archdiocesan CCE Office.

Basic Competencies for Confirmation Catechists

The Confirmation catechist will

- exhibit a mature and active Catholic faith life
- demonstrate an openness and willingness to serve as a model and Catholic witness to the adolescents whom he/she catechizes
- develop a basic understanding of Church history & sacramental theology with specific references to:
 - a. the theology for the sacrament of Confirmation
 - b. the Holy Spirit and Sacrament of Confirmation found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church
- understand the difference in faith development between the adolescent and adult years. [for those catechists working with persons with disabilities, an adequate understanding and appreciation of how to adapt formation to meet their needs]
- develop skills to apply appropriate approaches of faith formation during the adolescent years. This includes the use of Confirmation resources with adolescents
- understand one's role as a Confirmation catechist within the context of comprehensive youth ministry and ongoing, systematic catechesis

Catechists should be given a clear understanding of their individual role and responsibilities before they begin. Their ministry could be fulfilled by:

- carefully preparing candidates
- meeting regularly with small groups of candidates to explore catechetical themes, Church teachings, beliefs and values and to share faith stories, scripture and prayer
- building a community among candidates in order that they experience Christian community
- participation in retreats, liturgical celebrations and social gatherings
- being available for personal discussion and discernment

C. Retreat Coordinator

The retreat experience is a vital part of preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation. The retreat experience should provide the candidates with that rare gift of special moments of quiet, reflective time in their lives--time to reflect on day-to-day life experiences so that the ever present God can become a conscious presence in their lives. It is an excellent opportunity for peer-to-peer ministry.

The role of the Retreat Coordinator would:

- implement Archdiocesan guidelines for legal implications [e.g. permission slips, medical release forms]. This includes signed Archdiocesan ethical policies for all adults
- develop goals and strategies for the retreat
- organize the format of the retreat experience
- find the location
- direct all aspects of the retreat
- recruit personnel needed (including recently, confirmed youth as part of the retreat)

Note: In accordance with Archdiocesan policy, retreat coordinators should have completed the requirements for retreat formation established by the Office of Youth Ministry as well as the VIRTUS safe environment program.

D. Liturgy Coordinator

The liturgical aspects of the preparation process are important milestones in the candidate's journey toward full initiation into the faith community.

The Liturgy Coordinator, in addition to overall preparation, would be responsible for:

- coordinating, preparing and implementing liturgical rites during the preparation process, as well as the celebration of the Rite of Confirmation
- keeping the candidates informed on plans and purpose of the liturgical celebration
- assisting the candidates in full, active, and conscious participation in the celebration
- collaborating with the music coordinator and Confirmation team coordinator to ensure full, conscious, and active participation by the assembly in the liturgies and Confirmation Mass

PARENTS

Parents are called to be actively involved in the Confirmation preparation program. However, their involvement is very different than their role as parents in the sacrament of Baptism. Much like the sacraments themselves, the role of the parents is an extension of the commitment they undertook at their child's Baptism. It is the family which serves as the primary community of faith. As the child grows in faith, the parent's role lessens in regards to decision-making and becomes one of support and witness. For the sacrament of Confirmation, the parental role is very much one of spiritual companion and advisor, that is, both parent and child learning and growing in understanding of Catholic traditions and beliefs. As part of their continuing support and witness, parents should attend catechetical sessions provided by the parish for their own faith formation. With the parish's help, parents will be better able to share their own faith journey, thereby helping the candidate in his/her own decision to grow in their faith.

It is the family who serves as the first community of faith. The parents present their child for Baptism and initiation into the community of faith we call "Church." Once this step is taken, a prolonged preparation for full incorporation into the Church has begun with parents nurturing the gift of faith received by their child at Baptism through:

- personal witness in their own Christian lifestyle
- sharing their own faith experiences
- participation in Sunday liturgy with their child
- prayer
- providing opportunities for their child to fully participate in formal religious education experiences with peers

Parent Meetings

Parent meetings are a vital part of any sacrament preparation process. When deciding on the number of meetings, consider the many demands made upon parents today. A realistic number of parent meetings seems to be two or three two-hour sessions.

Carefully plan all meetings using effective adult catechetical experiences. Each meeting should include:

- History and theology of Confirmation
- An opportunity for parents to reflect and share the Spirit's movement in their own lives as well as helping them in their role as parents
- A discussion on how persons develop--morally, spiritually, psychologically
- Small group reflection and faith-sharing
- Overview of the preparation process and materials to be used
- Ideas for home follow-up
- Information on schedule of events for the entire process
- Short prayer service

Care should be taken that parents who previously have been through the program not be required to experience the same program. These parents could be used most effectively as discussion leaders and planners.

➤ **Sample parent meetings as well as practical suggestions for engaging parents and families in the formation can be found in the Resource section.**

SPONSORS

Canonical Guidelines for Sponsors

Sponsors represent in a personal way the witness and support of the parish community. Sponsors should be mature persons of faith who are highly convinced that their faith makes a difference in their lives. Opportunities for catechesis should be offered to the sponsors in order to assist them in fully understanding their role in the ongoing formation of the candidate. The sponsor should participate with the candidate in his/her preparation, as well as the celebration.

Requirements for Sponsors

Canon 893, §1. To perform the function of sponsor, a person must fulfill the conditions mentioned in canon 874.

§ 2. It is desirable to choose as sponsor the one who undertook the same function in baptism.

Canon 874, §1: To be permitted to take on the function of sponsor a person must:

- 1 ° be designated by the one to be baptized (confirmed), by the parents or the person who takes their place or, in their absence by the pastor or minister and have the aptitude and intention of fulfilling this function;
- 2 ° have completed the sixteenth year of age, unless the diocesan bishop has established another age, or the pastor or minister has granted an exception for a just cause
- 3 ° be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist and who leads a life of faith in keeping with the function to be taken on (e.g. if married, marriage must be recognized by the Catholic Church as valid);
- 4 ° not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared;
- 5 ° not be the father or the mother of the one to be baptized (confirmed).

The Roles and Responsibilities of the Sponsor

The sponsor, representing the witness, support and prayers of the entire Church, acts as a spiritual companion with the candidate. The sponsor should be a mature person of faith capable of meeting regularly with the candidate. The person should be comfortable conversing, praying, questioning or offering insights with the candidate.

It is recommended that a sponsor be chosen by the candidate early in the preparation process. When a candidate's baptismal godparent is available, capable, and willing to perform the role as Confirmation sponsor, "it is desirable to choose as sponsor the one who undertook the same function at Baptism" (*Code of Canon Law*, canon 893). This ministry can be fulfilled by:

- Accompanying the candidate to candidate/sponsor sessions, retreats or liturgical celebrations

- introducing the candidate to the dimension of service in the life of the community, and supporting him/her in some form of service
- reflecting on scripture and other background reading with the candidate
- assisting the candidate in the discernment process to know whether he/she is called at this time to make the Confirmation commitment
- sharing his/her own faith-story with the candidate
- being a "role model" of witness and example to a Catholic Christian lifestyle
- presenting the candidate for the sacramental anointing, attesting to the candidate's willingness and readiness to celebrate the sacrament

Once the youth has been fully initiated, the sponsor's task is one of follow-up, which is as important in many ways as all the efforts during the preparation period. However, it is less structured and informal. The sponsor could:

- inquire periodically with the confirmed person's efforts, challenges and success in living as a more active witness for Christ
- offer suggestions and assistance in helping the newly confirmed to become an active member of the Church community

Sponsor Meetings

Sponsor meetings are necessary so that the sponsor can become fully aware of their necessary commitment.

Using principles for adult education, the meetings should include:

- history and theology of Confirmation
- an opportunity for sponsors to reflect and share the Spirit's movement in their own lives and/or a shared reflection on their own Confirmation formation.
- the meaning and role of sponsor
- small group faith sharing
- information or involvement regarding time for meetings, retreats, service, etc.
- suggestions for sponsor/candidate activities
- ideas for follow-up with candidate
- prayer service

Criteria for Immediate Preparation in Confirmation Catechesis

FOCUS: To enable the older adolescent to understand their own faith experience in relationship to their parish community and the universal Church, to understand the gift of the Holy Spirit in their life, and to offer the adolescent the opportunity to become fully initiated in the life of the Church.

The adolescent candidate will...

1. Understand the meaning of grace and its presence in his/her life.
2. Understand that faith development and his/her participation in the Church is a lifelong process/journey.
3. a. Develop a Catholic understanding of Sacred Scripture.
b. Develop an appreciation of Scripture whereby each candidate can explain the value of specific Scripture passages, for his or her life.
4. Explore how Scripture, Tradition, the Beatitudes and the sacraments can help foster the development of his/her identity as a Catholic Christian by strengthening his/her relationship with Jesus and in living one's faith.
5. Name and integrate the meaning of the 10 Commandments in everyday life.
6. Demonstrate knowledge of the Creed and its Scriptural foundation. Appropriate and articulate the meaning of the Creed within one's life.
7. Understand how to use the gift of freedom to choose love and how to recognize and respond to cultural conflicts/temptations which detract from freedom.
8. Understand that sacraments were instituted by Christ using everyday signs and symbols to communicate God's love for them and the Church.
9. Recognize that sacraments center on initiation into the life of the Trinity.
10. Understand the meaning of Confirmation and its relationship to Baptism and Eucharist as sacraments of initiation.
11. Explain how the Pentecost event involves the sending of the Holy Spirit to the Church to complete the mission of Christ – to reconcile the world to the Father through Christ's redemptive love.
12. Recognize that the Holy Spirit enlightens, guides, strengthens and consoles us with real power to live a moral and just life.
13. a. Name and explain the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.
b. Understand and appreciate how each of the seven gifts helps strengthen the Christian in living morally (individually as well as communally).

14. Name and explain the fruits of the Holy Spirit and their effects in his/her life.
 - a. Appreciate him/herself as a unique gift created in the image of God.
 - b. Determine how the Spirit is prompting him/her to use his/her gifts for others.
15. Recognize and explain the meaning of “being anointed” through the symbols in the Confirmation rite.
16. Identify the various roles of the persons involved in the catechesis and celebration, i.e. Bishop, sponsors, parish community.
17. Recognize the witness of Christian models/saints in living the faith.
18. Participate in and reflect on the meaning of service as an essential dimension of Christian discipleship.
19. Participate in retreat experiences which foster their participation in community life and deepen their union with Christ and familiarity with the Holy Spirit – his actions , his gifts , and his biddings.
20. Understand the purpose of the Rite of Confirmation with the appropriate heartfelt affirmation of his/her responses.
21. Assess his/her readiness to be fully initiated as an active disciple in the life of the faith community.
22. Make an examination of conscience to determine his/her being properly disposed to receive the sacrament of Confirmation. To receive the sacrament of Confirmation one must be in a state of grace. The parish community must provide the candidate the opportunity as well as the encouragement to receive the sacrament of Penance in order to be cleansed for the gift of the Holy Spirit [CCC:1310].

MODEL FOR CONFIRMATION CATECHESIS

It is within this ongoing context of discipleship that immediate preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation must take place somewhere during the 10th or 11th grades.

Confirmation Preparation Takes Place Within the Parish’s Comprehensive Ministry with Youth:

1. It recognizes that young people learn, experience faith, and grow in faith in many ways.
2. Includes: evangelization, catechesis, community life, prayer and worship, service and justice, leadership development, pastoral care and advocacy.
3. Reflects the responsibility of the entire faith community and draws young people into participation in the ministry efforts of the Church.
4. Stresses the personal relationships and personal experiences with their peers and also with faith-filled adults within the community.
 - From *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, USCCB, 1997.

Confirmation preparation must include:

Proximate Sacramental catechesis for the candidate:

- that take place in the parish in which he/she worships
- is a process separate from the regular classes held in the school, CCE, or youth ministry program
- must be offered in a model that is formational, with the opportunity for prayer, scripture, reflection community building, and personal sharing

Discipleship Formation:

- participation in ongoing, systematic catechesis
- full, conscious, and active participation in the weekly Sunday liturgical and sacramental life of the Church
- active participation in the mission of the Church through stewardship of service and witness
- consistent living of the moral life according to the Scriptures and teachings of the Church
- engagement in personal and communal prayer

RETREATS

Sacramental Norms: I.6.b.i.a: Requires *a consistent engagement in the preparation process including participation in Confirmation formation, service experiences, and Confirmation retreats.*

Although the *Norms* leave it up to the pastor to define the above-mentioned criteria for his parish, the Office of Adolescent Catechesis and Evangelization believes strongly that retreats are an important part of every Confirmation process because they are a highly effective way for the candidate to deepen his or her relationship with Christ and to foster a growing familiarity with the Holy Spirit's presence in their life within the parish community. While "retreat" is defined as "to move away from something or someone," in a religious sense there is a "moving toward" God and others. A retreat intentionally calls people out of their busyness to examine how individuals within their communities choose to hear and respond to God's loving action in their lives. Jesus himself shows by example the importance of "retreating" for inner communion with His Father as well as to seek the Spirit's guidance in his life.

Ideally, the retreat can take place over a weekend in a place outside the parish. What is essential is that the retreatants can quiet themselves to experience God's presence within and among them. Before setting a date, the school calendar should be checked. Candidates should not be forced to choose between the retreat and other important events like homecoming, proms, band contests or significant sports' events.

Planning is the key to a successful retreat. A well-coordinated retreat team can share responsibilities: finding a facility, deciding on meals, preparing the schedule, developing the presentation and planning prayer experiences.

- **Note:** Persons organizing and directing their own retreats with youth must be trained by the Archdiocesan Office of Adolescent Catechesis and Evangelization in "retreat training". This includes an in-servicing of Archdiocesan legal guidelines [e.g. permission slips, medical release forms].

There are several types of retreats for teens. Each type will present specific objectives: building a sense of community, evangelizing young people into a [deeper] relationship with Christ, or deepening one's understanding of the Eucharist. Although they may contain aspects of a Confirmation retreat and might be

appropriate for a first retreat in the formation process, there are specific components that should be included in retreat prior to Confirmation.

During immediate preparation for Confirmation, two retreats are recommended. However, the pastor has sole discretion regarding the specific requirements in his parish.

1. **The first retreat**, is recommended to take place near the beginning of Confirmation formation and ideally would focus on building community and deepening their relationship with Christ. We are one body with many members.
2. **The second retreat** should be scheduled in relatively close proximity to the Confirmation Rite. The integration of the Confirmation retreat prior to the Rite of Confirmation should assist the candidate in assessing his/her spiritual growth for his/her journey of faith during the immediate Confirmation preparation period. It is an opportunity for the individual within the context of his/her faith community to examine how formation has helped foster:
 1. A more intimate union with Jesus Christ.
 2. A deepening familiarity with the Holy Spirit – His gifts, actions, and biddings. This could include addressing the challenges or obstacles in living as Christian disciples. Ongoing areas for personal faith growth within the context of the parish community. This could include areas for ongoing catechesis, service, and involvement in parish life. This retreat could include the opportunity for the candidate to receive the sacrament of Penance in order to be cleansed for the gift of the Holy Spirit [CCC: 1310].

Liturgical catechesis based on the Rite can help foster this retreat experience.

Some of the essential components from the Rite for this retreat are:

- a reflection on and renewal of Baptismal vows
- the meaning of being anointed [with oil] and strengthened by the Holy Spirit to live as more active witnesses to Jesus Christ
- an understanding of Pentecost [Acts 2:1-21], the power of the Holy Spirit, his gifts, actions, and biddings and how the Holy Spirit can help them grow in holiness
- an opportunity to participate in the Sacrament of Penance
- the celebration of Eucharist [either at the retreat site or back with the communal celebration of Eucharist]

SERVICE

Service as a dimension for Confirmation preparation should demonstrate the close relationship between faith and actions. **Service should be an intentional part of Christian formation from the time of one's Baptism until one's death.** What makes it unique during Confirmation formation is that it generates more of an intentional process whereby the candidates can identify, develop, and place his or her gifts and talents at the service of others. A reflection period for individuals and groups is an essential part of this process to help examine how such service reflects Jesus who serves. How does service bring the candidate closer to Jesus and to his or her neighbor with the gifts which God has bestowed upon them?

In that light, parishes sometimes establish a set number of hours to do service. It is far more productive to implement 2 or 3 well-planned service opportunities with time for follow-up reflection than to create a large number of hours' requirement that have to be done. The focus is to develop growth as a disciple who can generously identify and respond to the needs of others as Christ serves. It is this spirit which is an essential characteristic of Christian discipleship rather than completing an absolute number of service hours.

The following criteria may assist in planning meaningful service opportunities:

1. Consider areas of need within the parish that need attention. There may opportunities for candidates to assume more responsibility in the ministry and service of the parish.
2. Consider activities which generate relational and social questions such as issues facing the poor or persons with disabilities. There should be an intentionally planned opportunity for the young people to reflect together on their service experiences. Some suggested questions that might enable such discussion are:
 - What did you learn about yourself [your gifts; what you liked or disliked] as someone called to serve? About the persons or organization you served? If applicable, about your peers who served?
 - What does Christian service mean in living one's faith?
 - How did the experience of service reflect Jesus who serves?
 - How did the experiences incorporate the Corporal Works of Mercy [Mt. 25:31-46]?
 - How did the specific service experience address issues of social justice? Charity?
 - How in one's daily experiences can one foster a more just society?
 - How can one's faith community work together to foster charity & justice?
3. In everyday life, people are asked to make regular contributions to the maintenance and care of family and parish life. Examples such as home chores or being an altar server contribute to this end and should be valued as such. The candidates should examine how they can use their talents and gifts in serving others outside these regular or routine acts of service. This is an excellent opportunity for the candidate's sponsor to assist them with the planning and reflection. See the Resource section for suggested service activities utilizing the sponsor's help.
4. Be mindful of the candidate's commitment to school, extra curricular activities, family and work. Activities requiring transportation should be carefully considered.

PREPARATION for the CONFIRMATION LITURGY

A Guide for Preparing the Liturgy for the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston

A proper and worshipful liturgical celebration is the fruit of good preparation. Since the celebration of Confirmation is an important event in the worship experience of the entire parish, sufficient time and expertise should be devoted to its planning. The preparation of the participants also requires appropriate attention for the active participation of the faithful in the liturgy is the goal above all else. Preparation cannot be done by one or two people but requires the collaboration of pastor and parochial vicars, music and liturgy coordinators, DRE and youth minister.

The Confirmation team and the parish staff should collaborate closely throughout the entire preparation period. “It is essential that all forms of the liturgy be completely accessible **to people with disabilities...** Realistic provision must be made for persons with disabilities to participate fully in the Eucharist and other liturgical celebration such as the sacraments of Reconciliation, Confirmation and Anointing of the Sick” [PWD, USCCB 23].

The Confirmation liturgy presents both changeable and non-changeable elements. All preparation presupposes a sound understanding of the theology of Confirmation and an appreciation of the rite. **All planning should follow the RITE OF CONFIRMATION.** The Confirmation Team should review:

- the Rite of Confirmation including the introduction,
- the Mass prayers and the Scriptures that will be used (see below).

Special note should be taken of the liturgical season and the feast if Confirmation is scheduled on a feast day. All these are important to preparing the liturgy. Additional enhancements, such as slide or media presentations, are inappropriate for Confirmation because they detract from the Confirmation ritual. Liturgical movement [dance] should also *not* take place during Confirmation which is already a lengthy liturgy; this should be limited to other special events.

Central considerations in preparing the liturgy are threefold:

1. The celebration should emphasize the connection between Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.
2. All liturgy is an action of the entire body of Christ, head and members. The celebration of the sacrament in a parish should foster and encourage the participation of the entire community.
3. All preparation should be based on sound liturgical and pastoral considerations.

The Office of Worship has prepared a generic script which should be helpful in preparing the liturgy and the ministers. What follows is intended to assist the preparation team in fulfilling their pastoral responsibility.

Dress

The way in which we present ourselves expresses something about our interior preparation. The tradition of “Sunday dress” is laudably maintained in many parishes. Dress should be tasteful and in keeping with the dignity of the liturgical celebration. Dress should not be flashy or intended to draw attention to self but should reflect the preparation of the candidate for this tangible encounter with our Lord in the Sacrament. Coat and tie for men and young men and dresses or professional style suites for women and young women is considered appropriate dress. Dresses should be knee length or longer. Low cut and revealing clothing is not appropriate.

Ministers of the Liturgy

- ***The original and ordinary minister of the sacrament of Confirmation is a bishop.***

The variety of orders and the diversity of gifts among the people should be given expression in the liturgy. All liturgical ministers, e.g., deacons, lectors, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, ministers of hospitality, musicians, etc., whether cleric or lay, should do that and only that ministry which belongs to him or her. All ministers must be well-trained, experienced, and have a command of the nature and rhythm of the liturgy.

So that the candidates for Confirmation may properly dispose themselves to fruitfully receive the graces offered through the sacrament, candidates for Confirmation are not to serve as liturgical ministers in the Mass in which they will be confirmed. Participation in the liturgy as a liturgical minister is not the primary means for full, conscious and active participation in the liturgy.

Some points which may be helpful in preparing the ministers:

- altar servers should be rehearsed and familiar with their responsibilities. The servers assigned to assist with miter and crosier should sit near (preferably behind) the bishop and must keep their attention on the bishop and MC in order to present the miter and crosier at the proper time
- deacons should be aware of their role in the liturgy before the date of the celebration and how they will assist during the Mass.
- the lectors must be able to proclaim well the lectionary passage assigned to them. They should be able to be heard, understood but they must also understand the reading they proclaim.
- ushers must know any special instructions in order to guide the flow of the liturgy.
- extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion must know the location of their assigned station. There may be more ordinary ministers of communion than usual. Extraordinary ministers should be instructed appropriately and serve only if needed.
- sacristans should be aware of the color of vestments to prepare. Sufficient amounts of bread and wine should be prepared for Communion of the faithful without requiring Communion from the tabernacle.
- cantors should be well prepared and know how they are to assist the community as a leader of song.
- choir and cantor would benefit from a reminder about the theology of the sacrament and how the musical selections express the nature of the sacrament, the readings and\or the prayers of the Mass.
- multiple readers of the intercessions are to be avoided. If a deacon is present, it is appropriate for the deacon to read the intercessions.

Mass Texts

The ritual Mass for Confirmation may not be celebrated on the Sundays of Advent, Lent, or Easter, or on Solemnities, Ash Wednesday or the weekdays of Holy Week. On these days the Mass of the Day takes precedence. Even on Sundays in Ordinary Time or the Christmas Season when a ritual Mass may be celebrated, it is the archbishop's strong preference to use the Sunday Mass with its Scripture readings. Contact the Office of Worship with any questions.

When ritual Masses are permitted the prayers from the Ritual Mass for Confirmation are used as found in the Roman Missal (Sacramentary) under the section, "Ritual Masses: Christian Initiation, no. 4 – Confirmation." Ordinarily the Preface of the Holy Spirit is used (Roman Missal, Preface P-54 or P-55). The General Intercessions should be modeled on those found in the Rite of Confirmation and take into account the needs of the parish and the world.

Vestment color is as follows:

- Sundays – the Color of the Season\Day
- Solemnities – the Color of the Day
- Weekdays – Red (in most cases)

Scripture

“Sacred Scripture is of the greatest importance in the celebration of the liturgy. For it is from Scripture that the readings are given and explained in the homily and that psalms are sung; the prayers, collects, and liturgical songs are scriptural in their inspiration; it is from the Scriptures that actions and signs derive their meaning.”
(*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, no.24*)

Great emphasis should be given to the celebration of the Liturgy of the Word. **The lectors are to be chosen on the basis of their ability to proclaim the Word and experience as a lector. Lectors should not be selected as a reward, a recognition, or a way of encouraging their active participation in the liturgy.** A deacon, the pastor, or another priest will proclaim the Gospel. This is not a presidential act so the bishop will not typically proclaim the Gospel.

When Confirmation is celebrated on a weekday on which a ritual Mass may be celebrated, the readings may be taken in whole or in part from the Mass of the Day or from those suggested for Confirmation in the Lectionary for Mass. If Confirmation is celebrated on Sunday, the bishop instructs that the readings assigned for that day are to be used. Non-scriptural readings may not be substituted for any of the readings. Contact the Office of Worship with questions.

Music

“Among the many signs and symbols employed by the Church to celebrate its faith, music is of preeminent importance. As sacred song united to the words, it forms an integral part of solemn liturgy. Yet the function of music is ministerial; it must serve and never dominate.”

“Music should assist the assembled believers to express and share the gift of faith that is within them and to nourish and strengthen their interior commitment of faith. It should heighten the texts so that they speak more fully and more effectively.” (*Music in Catholic Worship, no.23*)

In selecting music, the following points are important:

The music which is chosen should reflect the meaning of the sacrament and the themes of the Scripture readings. **It is important not to dwell exclusively on the theme of the coming of the Holy Spirit as this approach tends to reinforce the “isolation” of this sacrament from the other initiation sacraments.** Include songs that are based on the broader themes of Easter, Baptism, and Eucharist.

Music selection should be based on the three-fold criteria of *Music in Catholic Worship, no.26-41*: musical judgment (technically, aesthetically, expressively sound); liturgical judgment (suitable for use in the part or action in the liturgy where it is used); pastoral judgment (selected to suit the capability of the assembly and musicians involved).

Of the music sung by the faithful within the Mass, the first priority goes to singing the Acclamations of the Mass (gospel acclamation, Holy Holy, Memorial Acclamation and Great Amen). Acclamations are shouts of joy and should be known by heart so that the faithful may easily participate. Next in importance is the music for the Gathering and Entrance of the ministers and Communion. (*Musicam Sacram*, nos. 7, 16, 29). These musical selections should be familiar to the assembly. The Preparation of the Altar and the Gifts and the Recessional may be done by the choir alone or with the assembly or may be accompanied by instrumental music alone.

Music chosen should be appropriate and must be of sufficient length to cover the ritual action. For example, the music selected for the Preparation of the Altar and the Gifts must cover the entire action and not end until after the bishop washes his hands. This means that when the altar is incensed, the time required for the entire ritual from the collection and presentation of gifts until the end of the washing of hands must be considered carefully.

There should be a proper balance between spoken and sung word, music and silence, sung and instrumental music, assembly and cantor/choir/group.

Questions that should be asked in the selection of music:

Is the music appropriate for the liturgy, the season of the liturgical year, and any particular feast celebrated that day, e.g., hymns appropriate during the Easter Season may not be appropriate for a weekday in Lent? **How does the hymn express the prayers to be proclaimed, the theology of the sacrament, or the inspiration of God's Word to be proclaimed during the liturgy? Do the lyrics convey Catholic theology and belief? Are the hymns "singable" by the faithful who will gather for the celebration, i.e., will even the visitors know the hymn or will only those of the youth group know it?** It is important to include traditional hymns that will be known by all gathered.

- A guiding principle is "singing the liturgy" vs. "singing during the liturgy."

NOTE: During the conferral of Confirmation, the bishops would like the faithful to hear the names and form for the sacrament, therefore instrumental music is preferred. However, when there are a large number of candidates, the assembly may become restless. It is recommended that an antiphon or several versus be sung followed by instrumental music, e.g., traditional settings of "Veni, Creator Spiritus" or other suitable hymns. After Communion, a lengthy Hymn of Praise or Meditation Hymn should be avoided.

Environment

It is important to attend to the quality of the signs, without showing "elitism", for Christ's followers, whatever their culture, must be able to recognize in the words and actions the Lord's presence in his Church and the gifts of his grace. The first sign is that of the assembly itself. Having gathered together, the community in a way gives hospitality to Christ and to the people he loves. Everyone's attitude counts, for the liturgical assembly is the first image the Church gives of herself, invited to the Lord's banquet. (John Paul II address to French Bishops, March 8, 1997)

The faithful gathered for worship "should not be there as strangers or silent spectators" but are called to "take part in the sacred service conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full involvement" (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 48). Clearly the liturgy is not simply a rational or intellectual exercise but involves the entire person both in mind and body. Through signs and symbols which are perceptible by the senses, Christ communicates to the faithful through the Holy Spirit the Fathers gift of salvation. It is through the celebration

of the liturgy that the faithful grow in holiness and receive the graces signified by the signs and symbols of the liturgy (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 7).

The beauty of the liturgical environment helps to reveal the infinite beauty of God (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 122). The liturgical environment should never be trivial, contrived or lack beauty as this can detract from the celebration of the rite (Built of Living Stones 18). “When God's people gather for prayer, the most intimate and all-embracing aspect of their life together occurs: the moment when they touch, taste, smell, hear, see, and share those hidden realities that would otherwise remain imperceptible” (*Built of Living Stones*, 140). The beauty of the liturgical environment conveys “the transcendent mystery of God—the surpassing invisible beauty of truth and love visible in Christ” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2502).

The following should be considered when preparing the environment:

“good liturgy flourishes **in a climate of hospitality**: a situation in which people are comfortable with one another, either knowing or being introduced to one another; a space in which people are seated together, with mobility, in view of one another as well as the focal point of the rite, involved as participants and **not** as spectators” (*Environment and Art in Catholic Worship* #11).

Ministers of Hospitality should be present to greet the gathering assembly; to seat people together; to pass out any necessary worship aids; to facilitate the flow of any movement; and to invite and direct people to the reception following the ceremony.

Nothing about the space where we gather is to dominate us when we are praying. “The most powerful experience of the sacred is found **in the action of the assembly**: the living words, the living gestures, the living sacrifice, the living meal” (*Environment and Art in Catholic Worship* no.29; see also Built of Living Stones).

Does all the worship space serve the assembly’s prayer (not distract from it)? Consider seating for assembly, seating for Confirmation candidates; seating for ministers; placement of the presider’s chair, altar, ambo, prominent symbols used in the rite; plan for procession routes; audibility of the sung and spoken word.

Does all artistic planning serve the prayer, ritual movement, and gesture of the rite?

Whatever the style or type, no art has a right to a place in liturgical celebration if it is not of **high quality** and if it is not **appropriate** (See *Built of Living Stones*, nos 146-149).

Do all objects used in the celebration meet the requirements of quality and appropriateness? Consider processional cross, candlesticks and candles, books (gospel, lectionary, Sacramentary), vestments, vessels, images (tapestries, sculptures, banners, etc.) temporary decorations (plants, flowers, etc) audiovisuals. Consider all sanctuary furniture.

Symbols

The nature of the liturgy demands that every action, gesture, word, and object be worthy, noble and authentic. For this reason, nothing artificial should be used in the liturgy, e.g. plants, or music (*Built of Living Stones*, 129).

Good symbols do not need explanation. They should meet the requirements of quality and appropriateness and be able to stand on their own power.

Entrance Procession

If the candidates for confirmation are to process into the church, this should be done prior to the procession of liturgical ministers of the Mass. The candidates should be in their seats in time to allow a few moments of silence before the start of the Mass with the Opening Hymn and Entrance Procession. There should be no attempt to equate graduation and the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Water and Sprinkling Rite

Except for Sundays in Easter, the Sprinkling Rite should not be used in the Rite of Confirmation. The connection between Confirmation and Baptism is made within the rite itself in the Renewal of Baptismal Promises.

If the parish normally includes a Sprinkling Rite within the Sunday liturgies of Easter, contact the office of Worship concerning the proper inclusion of the ritual within the Mass.

Presentation of the Candidates

If there are several candidates for confirmation (e.g., more than 25), the candidates should be presented as a group all at one time rather than individually by name. Letters from candidates for confirmation requesting the sacrament or letters from parents or sponsors should not be read during the liturgy. The bishops are happy to receive letters from candidates prior to the day of the liturgy. Pastors may also send letters to the presiding bishop concern particular aspects of the candidates for Confirmation, which he believes, would be helpful for the bishop to know in preparing for the liturgy. If there are adults who will be confirmed please notify the presiding bishop in advance so that he may prepare his homily appropriately. Adult candidates should be seated together and not among the youth candidates.

Renewal of Baptismal Promises

In the Rite of Confirmation, the candidates to be confirmed renew their baptismal promises which is witnessed by the assembly. The assembly give its assent to the profession of faith by the "Amen" following "This is our faith". This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it in Christ Jesus our Lord." In order to encourage the community's response, the choir should prepare a sung Amen acclamation which is very familiar.

Chrism and Anointing

The Sacred Chrism used in the anointing is one of the primary symbols used in the liturgy. It should be carried in the entrance procession, be in a container which makes it visible to the entire community, and be placed in a prominent place in the sanctuary during the ceremony. If the Sacred Chrism is not to be processed in during the liturgy it may be placed in a prominent location in the sanctuary before the start of the liturgy.

The anointing itself is to make generous use of the oil. **Candidates for the sacrament should be instructed that excess Chrism should be wiped with the hands and rubbed into the hands or forehead. The oil is consecrated and should not be wiped with a Kleenex or a handkerchief.** Candidates with eyeglasses might

remove them during the anointing with the Sacred Chrism to avoid getting oil on the lenses. It is also helpful if the Bishop is easily able to anoint the persons forehead without moving hats or hair.

The anointing action should be visible to the entire assembly if possible. Candidates are to come forward two-by-two as in communion with two candidates standing in front of the bishop (one candidate should not wait at the first pew while the other candidate is confirmed). Candidates are to move close to the bishop for Confirmation so that he can easily reach the candidate's forehead (it may be helpful to put a mark on the floor). It is very helpful for a catechist or a properly trained usher to stand at the front pew and help move the line forward and encourage the candidates to move close to the bishop.

Candidates are to wear a name tag with only their confirmation name (which may also be their baptismal name) printed in large legible letters for the bishop to read (indicate if the person should be confirmed in Spanish).

During the conferral of the sacrament, the pastor should be at the Bishop's left. A deacon (or altar server if no deacon is available) should be at the bishop's right holding the bowl with the Sacred Chrism. This minister should also have a purificator in case the bishop needs to wipe his hand of excess oil.

Use of Stoles or Robes

It has become the practice in some communities for the candidate to be presented with stoles during or after the Rite of Confirmation. A stole is the proper vesture for the ministerial priesthood. Robes or albs are associated with ministries. These are inappropriate symbols and practices for Confirmation and should be discontinued.

Commentaries

Generally, there should be no commentaries inserted into the Confirmation liturgy. The rite and the symbols are capable of speaking for themselves if the liturgy has been prepared well and celebrated carefully with graceful and generous gestures visible to all.

Worship Aids and Copyrights

The celebrating assembly should be provided with some kind of worship aid. It should contain the Order of Worship; any sung or spoken responses in which the faithful will participate; references to the readings and a brief summary. The full text is not normally printed unless a large number of faithful will not speak the language in which the Scriptures are proclaimed. The Scriptures should be proclaimed clearly and slowly so that all may hear and understand. The worship aid should include any copyright acknowledgements for music or prayers.

Practice

In addition to those points indicated under "Chrism and Anointing," a rehearsal of the liturgical ministers, candidates, sponsors and assembly is recommended.

Candidates should practice giving strong responses to the Bishop's questions and prayers as well as the usual parts of the Mass. This includes heartfelt expressions during the anointing:

Bishop: "Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit."

Candidate: "Amen."
Bishop: "Peace be with you."
Candidate: "And with your Spirit."

A brief rehearsal of music will encourage the participation of the faithful.

Photographers

Parishes should consider designating one or two photographers to take pictures during the conferral of the sacrament to eliminate the need for family members to make their way to the front to take pictures during the liturgy. Parishes should consult with the presiding bishop's office prior to the day of the celebration of Confirmation to ask if the bishop is available for photographs after the celebration.

Recording Names

Early in the Confirmation formation it is recommended that all candidates to fill in a form asking for the following information:

- *CANDIDATE'S FULL NAME,*
- *CHURCH and ADDRESS OF BAPTISM,*
- *DATE OF BAPTISM,*
- *FULL NAME OF PARENTS*
- *FULL NAME OF CONFIRMATION SPONSOR.*

If the address is not provided for the place of Baptism, this information can be found in the Official Catholic Directory.

Prior to the ceremony a name tag should be typed for each candidate. On the front of the name tag in large legible letters is to be the confirmation name ONLY. (To allow for proper distribution on the day of the Confirmation, the first and last name may be printed in very small type at the bottom right of the name tag. In addition, an index card (3" x 4½" available at Sacco's) is to be typed for each candidate. The card indicates the following information which is recorded in the sacramental register:

- (1) name of Confirmed
- (2) minister of Confirmation (Bishop or his delegate)
- (3) parents and sponsor
- (4) place and date of Baptism
- (5) place and date of Confirmation

On the day of the Confirmation, the Name Tag is given to the candidate and the card to the sponsor. The Name Tag will allow the Bishop to read the Confirmation name. When the candidate comes forward to the bishop, he/she presents the card to the pastor or an assistant standing next to the bishop. The name is not read from the card.

Note: Following the liturgy, the cards are given to the person who records the sacramental information in the parish Confirmation register of the confirmed. 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, no. 14, Canon 895, 535, §2).

POST-CONFIRMATION

Rather than serve as the completion of requirements or graduation from catechesis and active participation in the parish, a well-planned Confirmation program should provide a continuity of faith formation opportunities for the newly confirmed. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* stresses that Confirmation preparation should aim at leading the baptized disciple 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. The latter bears special responsibility for the preparation of the confirmands [1309].**

The Post-Confirmation period must be as well structured and planned as the Pre-Confirmation preparation period. Opportunities for catechesis, service, and involvement in the life of the parish ministries should continue what already has taken place prior to the sacrament of Confirmation. They should complement pre-existing Confirmation opportunities where parish ministries should have already begun to invite and mentor the young people into fuller participation into community life. The format for catechesis or opportunities for service or ministry may vary, but clearly the sacrament of Confirmation points to deepening their involvement in their faith, not completing or graduating in it. For example, some form of small Christian community often provides the ongoing small group process needed for fostering adult relationships, the study of Scripture and ongoing catechesis, service, involvement in parish and college campus ministries, and addressing continuing challenges of the Christian life. Service might include opportunities in peer ministry with those younger than themselves or in sharing their gifts in retreat work. For those persons with disabilities, “the Church must educate themselves to appreciate fully the contribution **people with disabilities** can make to the Church’s spiritual life ... that should serve as an inspiration to all Christians” [PWD, USCCB, 13].

I. Mystagogia

In the original catechumenate structure a period of days immediately following the Easter Vigil Initiation was set aside for mystagogia. Its purpose was to help the newly initiated better understand all that had taken place and to explain to them all the symbolism employed in the rites. It was a kind of debriefing.

Mystagogia presents an excellent opportunity for the parish community to reflect with the newly confirmed on the mysteries experienced in the Rite as well as the appropriation of the grace of the sacrament into their everyday lives. It should be a time to reinforce the idea that their life in Eucharistic community is in a real sense just beginning.

The newly confirmed may not necessarily notice the changes that have taken place within his/her life. The larger community, which may include parents and sponsors, may reflect or share with the candidates that which they have seen or experienced as a result of the young person’s being anointed at Confirmation.

A date for such a gathering should be established well in advance so youth recognize the meeting as an integral part of the Confirmation formation and not just an optional event.

The sessions could also include some gesture of appreciation to sponsors, for example, a pot-luck supper in their honor.

The following are suggested reflection questions for the mystagogia.

A small group setting is recommended. Parents, sponsors, or other parish members may be invited to participate with the newly confirmed.

Mystagogia Reflection Questions

For the newly confirmed:

1. What did you experience as you were anointed with chrism by the bishop at Confirmation?
2. How have you experienced the Spirit's strengthening power in your daily life?
3. How have you experienced the Spirit's presence in the faith community?

For the parish community:

1. What did you experience as you witnessed the anointing of the confirmands during the sacrament of Confirmation?
2. How have you experienced the Holy Spirit's presence in the newly confirmed?
3. How have you experienced the Holy Spirit's presence in your own life or in the life of the community since the Confirmation of the young people?

II. Celebration of Welcome in the Eucharistic Community After Confirmation

Due to certain logistics such as seating limitations or the time when the Confirmation liturgy is scheduled, the larger parish community may not experience the Rite of Confirmation. It is recommended that the newly confirmed be recognized as a group during a subsequent Sunday liturgy with a special blessing. In this way, the larger parish community can celebrate with the newly confirmed.

Other suggestions for the parish's recognition of the newly confirmed:

- A. The parish council provides a gift or certificate to the newly confirmed.
- B. A meal or reception is held for the newly confirmed and all members of the parish community.

III. Continuing Faith Formation For Older Adolescents and Young Adults

Faith formation and opportunities to participate in the life of the Church should continue after Confirmation. In truth, it involves a continuation of the Christian disciple's journey first begun at baptism.

It includes

- catechesis
- liturgy
- service & social justice issues
- community building & outreach efforts to evangelize non-participating Catholics
- developing personal gifts and talents within the parish or larger community

- pastoral council
- pastoral ministries

A. ONGOING CATECHESIS

It is important to emphasize the need for ongoing formation as a Catholic Christian. Short courses, lectures or study groups that deal with immediate concerns of the young adult. Older adolescents and young adults should have a greater flexibility in determining specific areas in their faith development that they want to address.

Catechetical sessions for older adolescents and young adults should occur primarily in small groups, preferably a non-classroom setting. Small groups tend to foster the interrelational or communal dimensions of one’s faith. It is important that a well-formed catechist facilitate these sessions.

Short term catechesis could include some of the following faith themes:

- Intensive Scripture Study Courses
- Building Relationships & Human Sexuality
- Jesus & Prayer
- Grief and Loss [Making Life Transitions]
- Women & Men
- Single, Not Alone
- Christian Marriage
- Being a Christian In the Workplace
- Dealing with Life’s Stresses
- Careers and Discerning Vocational & Ministerial Choices

B. SPIRITUAL RESOURCES

Days of Recollection, overnight retreats, an occasional special liturgy-meal-social evening and/or the formation of prayer groups can be sponsored by the parish in cooperation with young adults. Spiritual direction can be examined as a resource to assist in their spiritual development.

C. SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Actual events will depend on the interests of the young adults and can range from ski trips to dart ball leagues. The primary concern is to help youth recognize the parish as a resource for wholesome social activity with their peers and older adults.

D. SERVICE ACTIVITIES

Parish leaders should work cooperatively with older adolescents and young adults as a group or as individuals to develop opportunities for serving parish needs or larger community issues of service and social justice.

Please contact the Archdiocesan Office of Adolescent Catechesis and Evangelization (713-741-8723) for suggestions on comprehensive youth ministry.

SPECIAL SITUATIONS

CATECHESIS FOR BAPTIZED BUT UNCATECHIZED OR UNEVANGELIZED PERSONS

There are occasions when a baptized adolescent has not experienced a gradual process of formation to nurture some semblance of a prayer or relational life with God or understanding and application of the chief tenets of the faith. There seems to be little or no familiarity with Christ and the teachings of His Church. Perhaps they have not yet been prepared for or received the Eucharist or the sacrament of Reconciliation.

- **Preparation involves “a catechesis for Confirmation** [which] should strive to awaken a sense of belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ, the universal Church, as well as the parish community. The latter bears special responsibility for the preparation of confirmands” [CCC:1309]. Because Confirmation celebrates that which proceeds this immediate formation, time and care must be taken to insure a fruitful disposition of the candidate.
- The parish community must create a welcoming and inviting spirit which offers the baptized confirmand healthy relationships with adult and peer Christians.
- The parish should foster communal experiences such as retreats and small group experiences which promote opportunities for prayer and community involvement. Within this context, appropriate catechetical experiences can be offered to help the confirmand with the development of his understanding and application of the tenets of their faith.
- Formation should include intentional, systematic catechesis.
- It should also serve as an opportunity to involve the parents or family of the confirmand in supporting their own faith development.

CATECHESIS FOR "UNBAPTIZED" YOUTH

At times youth who have been raised Catholic come forward for Confirmation and they have not celebrated Baptism or First Eucharist. The reasons for the situation are numerous and varied but often there is a history in the family of hurt or alienation as a result of a church-related experience. Great sensitivity must be made in regards to their needs as well as the use of tender, pastoral care in dealing with each case. The guidelines for these situations are clearly outlined in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* [see reference below]. This is an opportunity to invite all of the baptized into the parish catechumenal process. This may be the perfect opportunity for catechesis for the entire family. Involving the families can yield greater results than simply playing "catch-up" with the young person. A carefully planned process should include a parent meeting, complete lesson plans developed around sacramental themes, several family meetings and celebration of various rites. Creativity, flexibility, and openness are needed in developing appropriate responses.

Within the catechumenal process at the Easter vigil, the catechumen is to receive all the sacraments of initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.

The Office of Continuing Christian Education can assist with suggested resources and planning.

Please refer to the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* [Christian Initiation of Children Who Have Reached Catechetical Age] before planning such a program.

BAPTIZED CATHOLICS WHO SEEK CONFIRMATION AS ADULTS

Some adult Catholics, for various reasons, were not confirmed in their youth. When adults come forward for Confirmation, it is often a result of change in their lives. The parish is challenged to structure flexible programs to meet the diversity of needs. Even active Catholics need time and guidance to become well prepared in order to experience the sacrament to the fullest.

The qualifications and readiness of the adult candidate should be the same as those described in the guidelines for adolescents.

Adults should be grouped with other adults and not be placed in the catechetical program for young persons.

"Adult catechesis should respect the experiences of adults and make use of their personal experiences, skills, and talents" (National Directory for Catechesis, 48:4). In Confirmation catechesis, adults should experience Christian fellowship in the community, a nurturing of their spiritual life of prayer, a heightened experience of worship, an opportunity for community service and a deepening of faith through the study of the topics described in Guideline III. Some candidates may need an extensive study of Catholic teachings. More active Catholics may need only four to six sessions for preparation. The Office of Continuing Christian Education has developed a six session resource which can be used to address Confirmation formation with adults. The

current pastoral practice in this Archdiocese is that these adults are confirmed by a bishop on the feast of Pentecost at designated parishes. For pastoral reasons other liturgical options might be warranted.

Newly confirmed adults should be invited to continue their growth by becoming involved in parish activities to their liking. Such things as adult education classes, Renew, being a lector, a Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, volunteering in the religious education program, working in a soup kitchen, etc., are some activities to which they can be invited.

When planning catechesis for adults, the following documents should be studied: - *Rite of Reception of Baptized Christians into Full Communion with the Catholic Church*. Bishops Committee on Liturgy, NCCD. Washington, D.C., 1973.

- *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, January, 1972.
- *National Directory for Catechesis*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005.
- A Model for Adult Confirmation Preparation in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston Apart from the R.C.I.A. (1996) is available from the C.C.E. Office.

CONFIRMATION CATECHESIS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Providing religious education for individuals with disabilities is not only our privilege, but also our duty. As a parish family we can expect that some 20% of our members will have a disability. If we truly recognize our equality before God in both our brokenness and giftedness, then we will ensure that the diversity of Christ's body is always present.

- Programs of religious education and sacramental celebrations that are inclusive should have facilities that are accessible. This may include providing designated parking, curb cuts, ramps to buildings and altars, electronic doors, and restrooms that are wheelchair accessible.
- Full class participation will be maximized when the catechist and class are made aware of and sensitive to the developmental needs of a person. Individualized or adapted modes of instruction will be required when serving persons who are developmentally delayed.
- Teaching concepts of our faith will be best accomplished through affective and symbolic means. The presence of God's love, as expressed through nurturing relationships initiated by catechists, pastors and the parish family, may be the most positive method of learning for an individual. This is reflective of the various ways in which we learn, as well as the infinitely different ways in which we encounter God.

In honoring parents as the primary educators of their children, we acknowledge them as an essential resource in developing successful methods of instruction for their child.

Interviewing the parents will provide information regarding prior levels of religious education and sacramental preparation. An understanding that persons with disabilities have parents and siblings,

who also need emotional support and spiritual enrichment, allows further opportunities to be fully responsive in ministering to the wholeness and holiness of the family.

Persons who have either physical or developmental disabilities should not be segregated unnecessarily from their peers. When a catechist and curriculum are selected, a schedule and classroom environment can be arranged. Although special instructions may exist, participation with peers in class and parish events, field trips, sacramental preparation and celebration are suggested as ideal. Instruction on the same parish grounds and following the regularly scheduled religious education calendar will help foster feelings of belonging and participation in the parish community by the student and their family.

The United States Catholic Conference of Bishops [USCCB] stated in their *Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities* that by reason of their Baptism, all Catholics are equal in dignity to God and have the same divine calling. Therefore, Catholics with disabilities have the right to participate in the sacraments as full functioning members.

Confirmation catechesis for persons with disabilities should, according to their individual abilities, lead them to:

- an understanding of the Holy Spirit being present in their lives
- an awareness of the responsibility to live daily a Christian life
- an awakening of their spiritual life, through prayer or other external expressions
- an explanation of the meaning of symbols used in the celebration of Confirmation

Incorporating a dramatization of the ceremony in the classroom will help candidates be more comfortable at their Confirmation. The rehearsal in the church prior to the ceremony will then provide an additional opportunity to familiarize candidates with upcoming events. These important preparations will assist in minimizing anxiety and fear, so they may receive this sacrament in joy and celebration with Christ.

The challenges of ensuring access and participation for persons with disabilities will serve to broaden our encounter with the Lord in all His people and provide sharing of the journey in the faith community.

Various curricula and reference materials for the catechesis of persons with disabilities are provided in the Resource section of these guidelines. It is not a comprehensive list, rather a core sampling of excellent materials that have been developed in recent years, in response to the heightened awareness and desire to become a truly inclusive community.

The Office of Continuing Christian Education offers training and resources, in both English and Spanish, to assist parishes in implementing appropriate curricula in their religious education and sacramental preparation programs that will ensure every person has the opportunity to participate fully, to their capacity, in all celebrations within the church.

“Those who have been baptized continue on the path of Christian initiation through the

sacrament of Confirmation. In this way, they receive the Holy Spirit, confirming them more perfectly to Christ and strengthening them so that they may bear witness to Christ for the building up of his body in faith and love.”

(Rite of Confirmation)

“Attentive to the norms established by the diocesan bishop, a pastor is to take care in a special way:
4° that catechetical instruction is given also to those who are physically or mentally impeded, insofar as their condition permits.”

(Code of Canon Law, canon 777)

“Parents, those who care for persons with disabilities, and shepherds of souls – especially pastors - are to see to it that the faithful who have been baptized are properly instructed to receive the sacrament of Confirmation and to approach it at the appropriate time. The diocesan bishop is obliged to see that the sacrament of Confirmation is conferred on his subjects who properly and reasonably request it.”

(Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities, USCCB, 1995)

“Persons, who because of developmental or mental disabilities, may never attain the use of reason are to be encouraged either directly or, if necessary, through their parents or guardian, to receive the sacrament of Confirmation at the appropriate time.”

(Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities, USCCB, 1995)

CONFIRMATION CATECHESIS RESOURCES

PRE-CONFIRMATION CATECHESIS QUESTIONNAIRE

Please complete this questionnaire and bring it with you to your Confirmation interview.

The purpose of these questions is to help make clear to you your current beliefs and practices as a Catholic. Being able to express these beliefs in words and in practice is an important part of Christian witness. Your responses will also better inform those adults who are helping you prepare for the sacrament of Confirmation.

- What does being a disciple or follower of Jesus mean to you?
- Who are some important persons in your family or life who help to support you in your faith? [e.g. Prayer, Mass, setting Christian example, encouraging how to handle struggles, etc.].
- What does it mean to be a baptized Catholic Christian?
- Describe your relationship with God [the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit]? [How do you experience God in prayer, in the sacraments, or in your daily living]?
- What does attending Mass mean for you?
- How do the Ten Commandments help you in your daily living?
- What are some gifts that you have that you feel might benefit your parish?
- What are some ways that you would like to see your parish help you to develop your gifts to become more included in the life of the parish?
- How do you hope Confirmation preparation will help you as a Catholic Christian?
- What other questions or concerns do you have about your Catholic faith?
- What are some of the obstacles or struggles you have in trying to follow Jesus?
- How willing are you to commit to formal Confirmation preparation as well as to ongoing participation in the parish after Confirmation? How willing is your family to make the same commitment?

Confirmation Interview

Confirmation Candidate: Please circle the number on each scale from 1- 10 that best represents your present understanding or practice of your faith.

1 = I know little or nothing. Or I rarely practice this area of my faith.

5 = I know some. Or I practice this area of my faith sometimes.

10 = I know most or all. Or I practice this part of my faith daily or frequently.

1. I know the basic prayers of our Catholic faith (The Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, Apostles or Nicene Creed, Act of Contrition).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. I can demonstrate a basic understanding of Catholic Scripture [e.g. explain key passages about our salvation history from the Old and New Testament].

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. I display a love for the Scriptures. I can recite and explain a favorite Scripture passage.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. I can explain the meaning of the (Nicene) Creed [e.g. the Trinity, the Church] for my life.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5. I can demonstrate how God loves me through my family/community, in personal prayer, catechesis, living morally, and participating in the sacraments and the liturgical life of the Church.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6. I attend and actively participate every Sunday at Mass.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

7. I am generous in my willingness to serve and to share my time and talents.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

8. I am faithful in keeping the 10 Commandments.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

9. I am a willing and active participant in my faith formation classes.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

10. I bring Christ's love to those who are in greatest need: the lonely, poor, hungry, etc.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

INSCRIPTION

If there is a decision that the person should enter into Confirmation preparation, an inscription or commitment could be signed.

CANDIDATE'S INSCRIPTION PROMISE

I _____, a member of
_____ Parish, desire to affirm my belief in Jesus and His Church.

Therefore, I ask to become a candidate for the Sacrament of Confirmation and to enter the program of preparation being offered by my parish.

To the best of my ability, I agree to take part in the activities that make up the program of preparation.

I accept the responsibility to open my mind and heart to the Holy Spirit during this time of preparation.

I understand that the keeping of this Inscription Promise during the coming months is an indication of readiness on my part for the sacrament of Confirmation.

Signature _____

Date _____

AN INTERVIEW FOLLOWING CONFIRMATION CATECHESIS

Following the catechetical preparation period the candidate should have an opportunity to discuss his/her readiness to receive the sacrament with a member of the Confirmation team. Give the candidate the sample questions at least a week before the interview to prepare for the conversation. Invite them to bring them with him/her to the interview. A sample interview follows:

- SETTING:** Pleasant, prayerful--Bible, candle, flower on small table with two chairs facing each other.
- GREETING:** - Smile--share welcoming comments that this is an opportunity to reflect together on the Confirmation formation as another part in the person's ongoing faith journey. Invite the candidate to be seated comfortably. After an opening prayer, begin by inviting the candidate to choose and respond one of the reflection questions in the candidate's interview. Continue to review the other questions.
- PRAYER:** Several options or combinations:
- a. Scripture of student's choice
 - b. Scripture of your choice
 - c. Possible Scripture readings by either you or student:
 John 3:16; John 14:26; John 15:9; John 14:16
 - d. Formal prayer such as Our Father, Hail Mary, etc.
 - e. Spontaneous prayer
- Ask the candidate how the formation helped him/her grow most in his/her faith.
 - Encourage him/her to describe an experience which illustrates this.
 - Read a description of individual and group service projects--ask the learner to share how these experiences helped him/her to grow in his/her understanding "to serve as Jesus serves". Ask how he/she sees service being a part of ongoing daily life [in ordinary or vocational/career ways].
 - Offer the candidate some closing comments regarding their life as a disciple of Christ.

AN INTERVIEW FOLLOWING CONFIRMATION CATECHESIS

CANDIDATE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What will being confirmed mean to you and why is it your choice to be confirmed?
What difference do you think being confirmed will make in your life?
2. How have you grown in your relationship with Jesus and the Holy Spirit?
3. How have you learned to recognize the Holy Spirit's presence in your daily life?
4. How can each of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit help you to live in closer relationship as a follower of Jesus?
5. Why did Jesus promise to send us the Holy Spirit?
6. What is the relationship between Pentecost and Confirmation?
7. What does it mean "to be anointed"?
8. What does being a Catholic mean to you?
9. What important individuals [saints, family, relatives, and friends] continue to influence your faith?
10. What are some gifts you have developed or which others have pointed out that you see being used to serve others or being involved in the Church after Confirmation?
11. Have you considered how your gifts might be used in service as a priest, religious, married person, single life, or in a professional ministry in the Church?
12. What does prayer and receiving the sacraments mean to you?
13. Describe the meaning of the Mass for your life today.
Has the meaning changed since you first began Confirmation formation?
14. What are some ways you witness to your Catholic faith in your family, parish, school, community, and world?
15. How do the beatitudes and 10 commandments affect the way you live your daily life?
16. How would you like the Church to continue to help you?

A Sample Confirmation Parent Meeting

Have the meeting in a setting which is conducive to adult education. The room should be large enough for the group, well-lighted and comfortable.

A Church usually does not get the same response or involvement as a parish hall. Many adults become passive in Church. A classroom has desks which are too small for most adults.

Schedule

- 7:00 Introductions and Purpose of Meeting
- 7:10 (1) What do you remember about your Confirmation?
 (2) How did your formation affect your life as a Catholic Christian?
 (3) What questions do you hope we answer tonight?
 (4) What do you want for your son/daughter because of Confirmation?
- 7:30 Prayer
- 7:35 History and Theology of Confirmation
- 8:00 Adolescents Today: Religious and Moral Development, Parent-Teen Relationships, etc.
- 8:30 Our Parish Confirmation Program
- 8:50 Questions
- 9:10 Short Prayer Service

Be sure to give time for parents to ask questions, but stay with the schedule. Start and end on time. Don't try to do everything or teach everything about religion.

Confirmation Parent Meeting

Total meeting time: 60 minutes

- Welcome & Opening prayer

Icebreaker [2 minutes]: Turn to one other person that you don't know and share one successful tip for parenting your child.

After 2 minutes, ask the large group if anyone would care to share something that s/he had learned.

Emphasize that the meeting has 2 purposes:

1. Discuss how parents can continue to help their children grow in their faith.
2. Explain the process of formation for the sacrament of Confirmation.

In a small group [5 minutes], **ask them to share something that they remembered about their own Confirmation** and at what age were they confirmed. Explain that if they were confirmed as infants or not confirmed, that is okay too. After 5 minutes ask for 4- 5 people willing to share what they learned and/or ask for a show of hands for the various ages when people were confirmed.

Teaching:

- Summarize how the Church has changed in its understanding and pastoral practices for Confirmation. Emphasize that, like OCIA, it is Christ's action of love operating within the community of faith. It is Christ as teacher, as model, as witness acting through the faith community. Emphasize that it is important to understand first how God is loving us through others.
- Ask them to take 5 minutes to reflect & share:
"Who, in your present [or past] community of faith, has most influenced your living of the Catholic Christian faith? How has this person done this?"
- When finished, again ask for a few people's input on this. Explain how the seeds of faith have been passed on to their children and need to continue to be passed on through them.
- Explain how their children as teens have questions about their faith: Why do we have to go to Mass? Why do we have to pray? Explain that these questions are important for them to make sense of their faith. Explain that the formation will emphasize helping their children understand how to live more faithfully strengthened by the Holy Spirit.

Large Group Dialogue: Ask the large group how perhaps they experience the Holy Spirit working in their daily lives or how they could more intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to help them with the challenges and temptations to live holy lives, faithful to Jesus, and witnesses to His life.

- In a large group, ask them what are some of the hopes that they have for their children in living the Catholic faith. Then ask them how they have helped their children realize these hopes.

- Take time to explain the requirements of the program. Explain this in the context of an invitation, God's invitation [sent by the community of faith] to prepare themselves to receive God's strengthening them to live faithfully in relationship to God and with each other.

Confirmation Sponsor Meeting

Meeting Time: 60 - 90 minutes

- ❖ Welcome & Opening prayer [Consider using a prayer from the Rite of Confirmation].

Explain that the purpose of the meeting is:

1. To understand the current theology, history, and pastoral practice for Confirmation
2. To understand the role of the sponsor.
3. To understand what the specific requirements are being asked of the sponsor.

Icebreaker [2 minutes]: Ask each sponsor to share with one other sponsor **their own experience of Confirmation formation**. It could include when they were confirmed and what they remember about the role of their sponsor.

- In the large group, ask for 4-5 responses. Get a show of hands when they were confirmed [infants, children, teens, adults].

Summarize how the Church has changed in its understanding and pastoral practices for Confirmation. Emphasize that, like OCIA, it is Christ's action of love operating within the community of faith. It is Christ as teacher, as model, as witness acting through the faith community. Emphasize that it is important to understand first how God is loving us through others. Consider using the comparative diagram of pastoral practices.

- **Explain the history and theology of Confirmation:**

- **On the role of the sponsor**, begin with a 5 minute reflection & sharing with one other person: "Who, in your present [or past] community of faith, has most influenced your living of the Catholic Christian faith? How has this person done this?"

- Then in the large group, ask for a few people's input on this. Explain how the seeds of faith have been passed on to the children from parents, adults, and other significant persons. It involves a continuous need to pass on the faith to others.

Summarize: Explain how teens have questions about their faith: Why do we have to go to Mass? Why do we have to pray? Explain that these questions are important for them to make sense of their faith. Explain that the formation will emphasize helping the youth understand how to live more faithfully strengthened by the Holy Spirit.

- **Explain the role of the sponsor:**

Finally, explain the requirements for the sponsor in the program. Explain this in the context of God's invitation to help prepare and share themselves with the candidate to receive God's strengthening love in order to live more faithfully live in relationship with God and with each other.

A Sponsor-Candidate meeting to prepare for Christian service

This activity is recommended as a shared meeting between the candidate and his/her sponsor. The outcome of this session should be reported back to the catechist or person overseeing “service”.

Objective: **Understanding the meaning of stewardship – identifying & developing one’s gifts for service.**

Read: **“How many things we own that we do not give away because we feel so attached to them. It is better to have less in order to give it all to Jesus.” – Mother Teresa**

Sponsor begins: “Today we are here to identify some of our gifts and how God wants us to use them to serve others.”

Read: “Let us not be satisfied just by giving money. Money is not everything. Money is something that you can get. The poor need the work of our hands. Love, an abundant love, is the expression of our Christian religion.”
– Mother Teresa

Stewardship

In responding to the needs of others, Jesus invites us to take a few moments to take an inventory of the gifts he has bestowed on us as well as accountability for using these gifts.

➤ Read: **The Parable of the Talents [Matthew 25: 14-30] [optional reflection: See African-American perspective reflection on The Principle of Kuumba [creativity] The Catholic Youth Bible, p.1158]**

Before helping the candidate to reflect on his or her gifts, the sponsor should take a few minutes to share with the candidate some of the gifts or talents he/she has and how he/she has developed and used them in service.

1. Make a list of some of your personal gifts [e.g. talents, time, treasures] or resources that you could share with others? How could you use your gifts to serve others? What are some of the needs in my neighborhood, parish, or larger community in which you could use some of your gifts? [Some of these needs might be identified with help from your catechist or sponsor].
2. What are some of the obstacles or fears that you might encounter trying to respond to others? Being made fun of? Fear of their strangeness? Fear of not knowing how to respond?
Fear of the unknown? Too busy?
What might be some way of addressing these obstacles or fears?
3. What experiences have you already had helping persons? What did you get out of this experience? What did you learn about yourself? Others from this experience?
How was this serving like Jesus served?

➤ Report **what you plan to do in using your gifts to your catechist or service coordinator.**

CONFIRMATION CANDIDATE'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

Name _____

Sponsor _____

Confirmation candidate's inventory of gifts & talents. [List below.]

I will use my gifts & talents in the following ways:

A Catechetical Session to Reflect on Service Experiences

Objective:

Understanding the meaning of stewardship – being accountable for using one’s gifts in service.

Begin: “Today we are here to reflect how our service experiences are a reflection of our call to serve as Jesus taught us.”

Read: “How many things we own that we do not give away because we feel so attached to them. It is better to have less in order to give it all to Jesus.” – Mother Teresa

Continue: The following video will help put into perspective how service is who we are as disciples of Jesus.

View: Teen Discipleship [13 minutes]

Small group [sharing]:

1. What did you enjoy about your helping others? What did you find challenging? How did you deal with the challenges?
 2. How did serving make a difference for others? For you? Imagine yourself in a face-to-face meeting with Jesus today and he asks you to be accountable for how you have used your talents and gifts in serving others, how would you respond? Which of your talents have you used and developed to serve others?
 3. How did this service express your Christian identity?
- **Pass a lighted candle** around the room inviting anyone to share something they are committed to continuing in Christian service of others.

Read: “Jesus continues to live his passion. He continues to fall, poor and hungry, just like he fell on the way to Calvary. Are we at his side to volunteer to help him? Do we walk next to him with our sacrifice, with our piece of bread –real bread- to help him get over his weakness?” – Mother Teresa

Closing Prayer.

Suggestions for Involving the Parish Community in Confirmation Formation

The following is a list of possible ways to engage more fully the entire parish community in Confirmation formation with the Confirmation candidates. Each parish must discern for its community where and when it would be best to introduce these suggested practices.

1. At Sunday liturgy, renew baptismal vows with the Confirmation candidates.
2. The parish is invited to reflect over a period of 7 weeks how each of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is manifested in their daily lives. Opportunities after Sunday liturgy can be offered to share these reflections with the candidates. *E.g. "Where in your life this week did you need to call upon the Holy Spirit for courage?"*
3. The parish participates in a 9 day or week novena in solidarity with the candidates in which all call upon the Holy Spirit to enlighten, guide, strengthen, and console the community in its following of Christ.
4. The parish walks a "Stations of the Spirit" devotion with the candidates.
5. The parish community highlights and shares with candidates how it serves through acts of charity and social justice.
6. The community includes a period of mystagogia where parishioners reflect with the newly confirmed on the Spirit's strengthening in their daily lives.

Additional Suggestions for Involving the Parish Community in the Candidates' Formation

1. Make announcements through bulletins, newsletters, posters, periodic letters from the pastor concerning who the candidates are, what is happening in the preparation catechesis, service projects, information on the celebration itself and reports on follow-up.
2. Offer some formal acknowledgement by the community of those beginning Confirmation preparation. This could be done at the Sunday liturgies. Refer to the catechetical and liturgical resources for appropriate adaptations of RCIA rites.
3. Provide frequent reminders to pray for the candidates on Sunday and through special notices. Some parishes have developed a method of several parishioners praying for each candidate and a written expression of this prayer support is given.
4. Offer prayer services for the candidates and the parish community.
5. The parish community must provide the candidate with the opportunity as well as the encouragement to receive the sacrament of Penance in order to be cleansed for the gift of the Holy Spirit. [Catechism of the Catholic Church:1310]
 - Plan a Reconciliation liturgy prior to the Confirmation liturgy. The celebration of the sacrament should be held when the community can attend. An invitation should be given to the entire community to join the celebration.
6. Assist in welcoming and mentoring the candidates into membership in parish groups and organizations. Help the Confirmation candidates identify and develop their gifts with appropriate opportunities to share their gifts with the larger faith community.
7. Parishes should encourage persons with disabilities to participate in all levels of pastoral ministry [e.g. as care ministers, catechists, etc.]
8. Invite younger children in Catholic schools or parish catechesis to pray for, discuss and make posters showing their support for the candidates.
9. Confirmation candidates could occasionally join catechumens in prayer and sharing.
10. Each parish organization or ministry should be encouraged to take steps toward explaining the nature and purpose of the organization/ministry to the youth. The organizations/ministries should establish a process for inviting and mentoring candidates. The organizations/ministries should also strive to examine how the youths' unique gifts can contribute to the organization.
11. Though still living with parents, the candidates should be included in the parish process for stewardship [e.g. time, talent, and tithing].
12. Where appropriate, candidates should be included with other adults in invitations to serve (e.g. parish social events or social justice/service opportunities).

In short, it should be visibly demonstrated that the candidates are warmly regarded and welcomed within the parish's community and its life. This demands that the community reach out in **personal** ways to them.

PARENT, FAMILY & SPONSOR ACTIVITIES

It is good to provide activities to support parents and sponsors' preparation of the candidate in the home and community. When giving suggestions, emphasize that the parents and sponsors not try to initiate every activity. Rather, encourage them to choose a few of the activities that best suit their situation. Suggested activities are:

- Write out the baptismal promises as a family and sign these promises renewing the baptismal commitment. If baptismal candles are available, light these during the renewal.
- Discuss the various parish organizations. Introduce the candidate to some of the parish leadership.
- Together pray the Creed--"We Believe"--which is part of the Sunday Eucharistic Liturgy. Take portions of the prayer and discuss the meaning for your lived experience.
- Prepare a special place for the Bible in your home. Place a candle beside the Bible. As the family gathers, light the candle and read a portion telling of the work of the power of God--the Holy Spirit. Take a different passage on various days and after a short discussion, lead into prayer by saying, "Let us Pray...." Prayers of praise or petition may follow. All might close by praying the Glory be to the Father....

SUGGESTED READINGS

Luke 1:63-68	Zechariah is filled with the Holy Spirit
John 1:29-34	John the Baptist recognizes the Holy Spirit
Luke 4:14-19	Isaiah is sent by God's power
Acts 2:1-4	Apostles receive the Spirit
Acts 8:14-17	Laying on of hands
Exodus 30:22-33	Directions for the preparation of chrism
Isaiah 11:1-2	Gifts of the Spirit

PARENT, FAMILY & SPONSOR ACTIVITIES

- On one evening light a special candle and after reading or reviewing the gifts of the Spirit, each member of the family shares a time they believe that the Spirit of God was with them in a special way or discuss how each member could call on the Holy Spirit to use that gift.
- Discuss the meaning of "being anointed" as prophets and kings were once anointed. Examine areas in family life or in the larger community where the family could bring the Spirit's power into action. Parents should be prepared to start and encourage the candidate by recounting ways the family has found strength in God's power (cf. Isaiah 11:1-2)
- In preparation for a Sunday liturgy have the family gather with the Bible and candle placed in the center of the group. One member of the family should have prepared a Sunday reading. Talk about what you hear Jesus saying to you. Discuss how your family can live this message during the coming week.
- Prepare a blessing for the evening meal. While the parent says the blessing he/she should extend his/her hands. All should be encouraged to respond with "Amen, Alleluia," or some other appropriate response.
- Parent[s] or family members might write a letter to the candidate expressing their love and concern.
- Sponsor and candidate could attend a weekday liturgy together.
- Sponsor/parents could take some time to share their faith beliefs with the candidate.
- Sponsors could write a note to the candidate expressing his/her interest in the candidate's preparation.
- Parent/sponsor pick a certain day each week to pray especially for the candidate.
- Discuss a Christian's responsibility to support and serve the Church. Share ways you respond to this responsibility. Discuss ways which the candidate can meet this responsibility.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used for key Church documents cited in the text:

CIC *Codex Iuris Canonici (Code of Canon Law 1983)*

CCC *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

GDC *General Directory for Catechesis*

LG *Lumen Gentium*

NCD *National Catechetical Directory, 1979*

NDC *National Directory for Catechesis, 2005*

OC *Ordo Confirmationis*

RCIA *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*

USCCB *United States Catholic Conference of Bishops*