

Diocese of Lansing
The Sacrament of Confirmation
FAQ Regarding formation, instruction and catechesis

Parishes are encouraged to structure the preparation process however they discern it to be most fruitful for their community. The essential goal is that per canon law and the hope for fruitful reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation, the criteria found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1309 are met.

“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.** 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 confirmands.” CCC 1309

In order to be confirmed:

1. Candidates for Confirmation must be baptized.
2. Candidates for Confirmation must be suitably instructed, properly disposed, able to renew their baptismal promises. (cf. Canon 889/CCC 1309)
3. Candidates for Confirmation must be at or beyond the age of reason. In the Diocese of Lansing, the current norm is that Candidates are generally to be in grades eight through ten.

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Confirmation

Retreats

Q: Must a candidate for Confirmation attend a retreat in order to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation?

A: No. However, according to Canon 889 §2, in order to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation licitly the candidate must be suitably instructed. This can look many different ways. If the pastor and faith formation leaders have in place a structure wherein that “suitable instruction” takes place in a retreat setting, then that would be seen as acceptable. In this case, the “suitable instruction” at the retreat should include instruction based on paragraph 1309 in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

This “suitable instruction” should also include some explanation and modelling on the teachings specific to the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of a disciple, as seen at Pentecost and throughout the New Testament, particularly the Acts of the Apostles.

Sponsors

Q: Do candidates have to choose a sponsor for Confirmation?

A: “Insofar as possible, there is to be a sponsor for the person to be confirmed; the sponsor is to take care that the confirmed person behaves as a true witness of Christ and faithfully fulfills the obligations inherent in this sacrament.” (Canon 892)

Q: If candidates choose a sponsor who should it be?

A: Since the Sacrament of Confirmation completes the graces received at Baptism, in order to act as a sponsor, a person must fulfill the conditions mentioned in canon 874 (See Canon 893).

Can. 872 “Insofar as possible, a person to be baptized is to be given a sponsor who assists an adult in Christian initiation or together with the parents presents an infant for baptism. A sponsor also helps the baptized person to lead a Christian life in keeping with baptism and to fulfill faithfully the obligations inherent in it.”

Can. 873 There is to be only one male sponsor or one female sponsor or one of each.

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

1/ be designated by the one to be [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;

4/ not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared;

5/ not be the father or mother of the one to be baptized.

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

Saints Names

Q: Do candidates have to choose a saint's name for Confirmation?

A: No. This is a longstanding tradition that is encouraged. If you do choose a saint's name, find a saint (or blessed/venerable) with whom you identify and can develop a relationship through prayer and study. If you do not choose a saint's name you may use your baptismal name.

Q. Can I choose a name of someone from the Old Testament?

A. Yes. “The patriarchs, prophets and certain other Old Testament figures have been and always will be honored as saints in all the Church's liturgical traditions.” CCC 61

Service Hours

Q: Do I have to perform service hours in order to be confirmed?

A: Not according to Canon Law. However, Christian service demonstrates the faith that is to be confirmed. It can also be used as part of what Canon Law calls “suitable instruction.” If the pastor at your parish wants to include service of some sort or service hours as a tool to help in that end, then candidates would be obliged to participate. If service opportunities as part of Confirmation preparation are to be incorporated proper catechesis regarding servant-hood should also be given.

Letter of Intent

Q: Must confirmation candidates write a letter of intent to the Bishop or their pastor, asking to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation?

A: This is not mandatory, but if parishes find it to be a worthwhile practice they are welcome to incorporate this into the preparation process.

Preparation Process

Q: Can parishes have multi-year preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation?

A: Yes.

Q: What might the suitable instruction for Confirmation look like?

A: Discern. First you will need to discern your community. When does it make sense to offer the Sacrament of Confirmation? Discern a team of spirit-filled, committed disciples who are living witnesses to the criteria found in CCC 1309 (see above) to help with the preparation process. Discern any of the aforementioned practices which will be most fruitful for your community.

Discern what resources you believe will help the candidate develop a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit and assume their apostolic responsibilities. Discern whether you will use a packaged program, a blend of various programs or create your own. Feel free to contact Tim Carpenter or Brian Flynn for help in this process. tcarpenter@dioceseoflansing.org or bflynn@dioceseoflansing.org.

Already Confirmed Individuals

Q: What if there is a student who has already been confirmed, whether through the Eastern Catholic or Orthodox Churches or perhaps the RCIA process? Can they be involved in the Confirmation preparation?

A: Yes. They are welcome to participate in the process for ongoing formation and are encouraged to participate in the Confirmation liturgy in some way. However, they may not participate in the Confirmation liturgy as though a candidate. The mark of the sacrament is permanent (indelible) and so they cannot be confirmed again.

Sacramental Preparation for Other Circumstances

Q: What are the Confirmation policies regarding the Christian initiation of unbaptized children of catechetical age?

A: Catechetical age means 'at or beyond the age of reason', or about age seven. Unbaptized children of catechetical age, after suitable formation and catechesis, will receive the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist), preferably at the Easter Vigil or during the Easter Season as stated in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, nos. 304–307. Due to varying circumstances and scenarios regarding those who have begun but not completed the process of initiation, you will need to refer to the National Statutes for the Catechumenate, found in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, appendix three. Contact Jeremy Priest in the Office of Worship with any questions.
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