

CONFIRMED IN DISCIPLESHIP

A VERY Brief Overview of the Sacrament of Confirmation

(Excerpts from the Diocese of Green Bay's 1997 Confirmation Guidelines)

Part One: Confirmation and the Paschal Mystery

The central theme of the Hebrew Scriptures is the Passover-Exodus-Covenant.

Part Two: Sacraments of Initiation - Past and Present

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* identifies Baptism, Confirmation and First Eucharist as the Church's Sacraments of Initiation. (CCC, # 1212)

Part Three: Dimensions of Initiation

If initiation is the proper context for understanding Confirmation, we need to explore briefly the various meanings of initiation.

READINESS FOR CONFIRMATION PREPARATION

The following are basic understandings of our Catholic teachings and Tradition that confirmation candidates will have acquired during their years of catechesis prior to the Confirmation Preparation program.

Candidates for Confirmation demonstrate the ability:

- to give at least a simple explanation of the Paschal Mystery's centrality in our Catholic faith and its relationship to the Passover-Exodus experience and in the death-resurrection of Jesus.
- to explain the nature and importance of the Scriptures in the life of the Church;
- to describe in general terms how the Scriptures developed through stages of oral and written tradition;
- to apply fundamental principles to the reading of Scripture.
- to give an adequate definition of the Church which includes:
 - its origins in Jesus
 - its nature as a community of disciples
 - its organizational structure as a visible institution
 - its sacramental nature and the various dimensions of its mission
- to explain and apply the basic moral values of the Gospel and Church teaching to their life situation and the moral decision they face.
- to describe the nature of sacraments in general and the ability to describe the nature and purpose of each of the seven Sacraments.
- to explain the nature and importance of the Eucharist and prayer in the life of the Church.
- to describe a personal relationship with Jesus and a desire to be his disciple.

COMPETENCIES RELATED TO CONFIRMATION PREPARATION

In light of the guidance given by the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* the following can be considered the minimum desired competencies that result from any Confirmation preparation program in the Diocese of Green Bay. The Confirmation candidates will:

- understand that Baptism has established them in a relationship to Jesus that is best described as discipleship.
- describe the nature of discipleship in Jesus.

- demonstrate a disciple's ability to sustain and deepen their relationship to Jesus through prayer.
- be familiar with various forms of prayer in their life.
- demonstrate a disciple's ability to continually strive to conform their lifestyle to Gospel vision and values proclaimed by Jesus.
- demonstrate a disciple's willingness and ability to enter more fully into Jesus' mission of proclaiming the Good News of God's Reign through:
 - service to others
 - good example
 - prophetic witness
 - word.
- explain the role of the Spirit in the life of the Church and in the life of discipleship
- describe the nature and function of the Gifts of the Spirit that are bestowed in a special way in Confirmation.
- explain the historical significance of the symbols and ritual involved in the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- explain the role religious imagination plays in the spiritual life and in the Church's tradition of worship.
- demonstrate an appreciation of the essential place that "full, conscious and active participation" in the Eucharist is to play in their ongoing life as a confirmed disciples of Jesus and member of the Church.

ESSENTIAL PROGRAM COMPONENTS

General Preparation

General preparation includes all the formal and informal catechetical formation provided to a child by parents and the parish from baptism through the tenth grade.

Formal Preparation Program

- An information session for parents and youth that presents the following information:
 - An explanation of the nature and importance of Confirmation (as outlined in the *Confirmed in Discipleship Essay* above)
 - The role and responsibilities of both parents and youth in the preparation program.
 - The nature and role of the sponsor and guidelines for selecting a sponsor.
 - An overview of the preparation program's schedule of classes and related events.
- The selection of sponsors.
- A Sponsor Information and Training Session.
- A retreat experience consisting of at least one day.
- Core content to be presented in formal classes. This is to be considered the core or minimum content for the immediate preparation course.
 - The nature and importance of our overall growth as disciples of Jesus as foundational to preparation for confirmation.
 - The ongoing tasks/skills involved in the life of discipleship:
 - The theology of Confirmation: its roots in the Paschal Mystery and its relationship to other Sacraments of Initiation; the effects of the Sacrament.
 - The overall role of the Holy Spirit in the life of a disciple and the nature and effect of the Gifts of the Spirit conferred through Confirmation.
 - The Rite of Confirmation: its structure and the significance of sacramental symbols and actions employed.
- Sponsor/Youth sessions during which sponsors and youth meet to develop strategies for fostering the skills of discipleship needed for carrying out the mission of Jesus:
 - Christian service
 - personal prayer
 - participation in liturgy

- personal conversion

These sessions can also include the components of “remedial work” and reviewing progress.

- The selection of the name one wishes to have bestowed at Confirmation. (The confirmand may select his/her Baptismal name or any other **Christian** name.)
- An interview with the confirmand by a catechist, catechetical administrator, pastor or other person delegated by the pastor, to be provided before, during and/or at end of program.
- A letter written by the confirmand to the Bishop requesting to be confirmed and giving reasons for the request.
- The opportunity to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation at some time during the Formal Preparation Program.
- Practice, as needed, for the actual celebration of the Rite.

The above can be considered the essential elements of the overall process of preparation for Confirmation in the Diocese of Green Bay.

THE SPONSOR

Desirability of Having a Sponsor

- As far as possible, there should be a sponsor for the person to be confirmed, and the sponsor would be present at the Confirmation.
- The sponsor's duty is to see that the one confirmed acts as a true witness to Christ (Canon 892).
- It is appropriate that the sponsor at Confirmation be the same person who served as a baptismal godparent, but a special sponsor is not excluded.

Qualifications of Sponsors

- That one be designated by the person to be confirmed, or by the parents or the person who takes their place;
- That one be at least sixteen years old;
- That one is Catholic, confirmed and already has received the Eucharist, and is a practicing Catholic;
- That one is not under a lawfully imposed canonical penalty;
- That one is not the father or mother of the one to be confirmed(Canon 874. 1, 5).
However, even when there is a sponsor, parents may present their children for Confirmation. “Presenting” is the action of accompanying the candidate to the bishop (Rite 21).

[These are excerpts from the 1997 Diocesan Sacrament of Confirmation Guidelines, which contains much more information about the Sacrament, the preparation and celebration.]