

DIOCESAN POLICY ON THE CELEBRATION OF CONFIRMATION (14 January 2004; Bishop DiNardo)

The following policies [**in bold**] apply to the preparation and celebration of Confirmation for baptized Catholic children under the age of eighteen in the Diocese of Sioux City whether the children are receiving the catechesis of the sacrament in religious education programs or Catholic schools. Guidelines are found under most policies to facilitate implementation of the policy for preparation and celebration of Confirmation.

IV.2.1 General Norms regarding the Celebration of Confirmation

A. The formation of adults (age eighteen (18) and older) shall follow the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

- Adults (age eighteen (18) and older) who have not completed their Initiation are to be referred to the parish's Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.
- For more information see Part I of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

B. The formation of children of catechetical age (approximately seven (7) years of age and older) who have not been baptized shall follow the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

- Parishes are to prepare unbaptized children using the format of the RCIA since the initiation of all persons of catechetical age, even at the age of seven, includes the celebration of Baptism, Confirmation, and First Eucharist in the same ceremony.
- For more information see Part II, #1 of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults; Canon 852, §1; National Statutes, #18; and Diocesan Policy on Baptism: IV.1.1.

C. The formation of children of catechetical age that were baptized as infants shall follow the diocesan policy for Confirmation (this document). Persons of any age, already baptized in another denomination, are not to be re-baptized since this sacrament cannot be repeated. If this person has not celebrated their first Eucharist they are to be admitted to preparation for Confirmation and are to celebrate both sacraments at the same celebration.

- If a child presents himself or herself for Confirmation at the age of the children preparing and has been baptized (in any Christian denomination that has valid baptism), but has not been admitted to Communion, he/she is to prepare to celebrate Confirmation and Eucharist together at the same celebration. Preparation for Confirmation usually includes catechesis on the Eucharist that can be considered preparation for the celebration of the Eucharist. Comprehensive catechesis for Confirmation should be adequate for preparation for the celebration of the Eucharist.

D. If there is no proof or memory of baptism a conditional baptism can be conducted after proper catechesis. These persons are to be admitted to preparation for the celebration of Confirmation as prescribed by this Diocesan Policy.

E. If the person was initiated in a denomination that is known to conduct invalid baptisms, the persons are to be baptized after proper catechesis. In this case, this baptism would not be a conditional baptism, but the first and only baptism for the person. In this case the person is to be admitted to the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults as prescribed by Diocesan Policy IV.2.1.B.

- For a list of "SOME CHURCHES WITHOUT VALID BAPTISM" see Appendix II, CCR 1-2.

F. The Catholic Church does not accept the confirmation of other Christian denominations except those of the Orthodox Church. Confirmation in the Catholic Church must be received by all candidates in the RCIA process.

G. Parishes in the Diocese of Sioux City shall invite baptized children of catechetical age to be admitted to the preparation for celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation as prescribed by

this Diocesan Policy.

- Pastors and Directors of Religious Education can invite baptized children of catechetical age to be admitted to the reception of Confirmation through methods such as a letter explaining the process, regular newsletters, parish bulletin and informational meetings.
- H. A well-disposed baptized Catholic, who is appropriately prepared according to age and condition, has a right to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation. No one shall be deprived of the right to celebrate the Sacrament of the Confirmation based on the marital status of the parents.**
- I. Confirmation is to be conferred on young people somewhere during the Seventh (7th) through the Eleventh (11th) grades, with the preference being during the first three high school years.**
- In light of the Religious Education Curriculum for the Diocese of Sioux City it is highly preferred that immediate preparation for Confirmation begin no earlier than ninth grade. After eighth grade the student has completed the initial standards for faith instruction and is now ready to reflect more deeply in order to profess the faith as his/her own.
- J. Parishes/Clusters desiring to change the age of confirmation in their parish/cluster must receive the approval of the Bishop.**
- Parishes/Clusters who desire to change the age at which confirmation is conferred in their parish/cluster within the Seventh to Eleventh grade range should do so in cooperation with the pastor(s), DRE(s), and the Confirmation Team of cluster parishes before asking approval of the Bishop.
- K. In accord with Canon 1065, §1, Catholics who have not yet been confirmed and wish to enter into marriage are to receive the sacrament of confirmation before matrimony if there is no grave inconvenience.**
- L. In accord with Canon 891, Confirmation is conferred in cases of danger of death or grave causes.**

IV.2.2 The Catechesis for Confirmation

- A. The adult(s) responsible for the young person, usually his or her parents, shall be involved in the preparation of the young person for this sacrament.**
- Parents should be involved through their own practice of the faith, attendance at all parents' meetings, and encouraging full participation of the candidate in the process.
- B. Preparation for Confirmation, under the leadership of the pastor, is to involve the entire parish community.**
- Ways in which the parish can be included are: service opportunities, catechesis, opportunities as sponsors, mentors, praying for the candidates, candidate witness at parish liturgies, adult witness at candidate gatherings, rites, and involvement in retreats and other candidate gatherings.
- C. In the preparation of candidates for Confirmation, a parish or cluster should form a Confirmation Team that is responsible for planning, coordinating, organizing, and implementing all stages of the Confirmation program in the parish or cluster.**
- Membership of the Confirmation Team should include pastor(s), Director(s) of Religious Education, catechists, parents, and persons recently confirmed. Youth ministers and liturgy directors may be included as well. One person should be appointed as Coordinator of the Confirmation Team. If there is more than one parish included in the Confirmation program, a catechist, parent and recent confirmand from each parish should be included. There should be a Catholic School staff representative if there are candidates in the Confirmation program attending

a Catholic High School.

D. Remote catechesis in preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation should begin as soon as a child enters the formal process of catechesis. It should continue throughout the school years and throughout life.

- Remote catechesis is defined as the person's formal and informal religious education received since baptism especially from his or her parents, their first teachers of the faith.
- Catholics, baptized as infants who have not received remote catechesis, but have accepted the invitation to prepare for Confirmation, should receive remedial catechesis as appropriate.
- Based on a variety of reasons, candidates, through no fault of their own, may miss the usual time for the celebration of the sacrament. Reasons may include: (1) a move by the family from one parish to another, (2) parents did not place the candidate in the parish's religious education at the normal time, or (3) the parents decided to delay the child's celebration of the sacrament.
- In order that the candidate and the parents are properly prepared, the candidate shall receive a minimum of two years of formation prior to the celebration of the sacrament. The pastor and coordinator will ascertain the formation the candidate has received in order to determine the candidate's catechetical needs. Pastors and coordinators may contact the pastor and/or coordinator of the former parish to learn what preparation was completed by the candidate.
- Candidates are expected to take part in formal catechesis for at least two years before Confirmation. Candidates who have already adequately participated in two years of formation are not to be expected to complete additional formation. The conclusion of formal catechesis should have taken place no earlier than two years before the person presents for Confirmation.
- Placing the candidate in a different grade level may not be appropriate or beneficial for the candidate's formation. Whatever is done should always be done in a spirit of hospitality, inviting the candidate into the community.

E. Immediate catechesis for the Sacrament of Confirmation is to take place before the celebration of Confirmation.

- Immediate catechesis is defined as the period of time for the candidate's deeper reflection on their faith and their preparation for the rites.
- Parishes/Clusters may determine the length of time needed for immediate catechesis in their circumstance. Yet, immediate catechesis should last from six (6) months to two (2) years.

F. Catechesis for Confirmation is to take place within the context of a parish's total catechetical program. Catechesis with clustered parishes is encouraged.

- Clustering is especially desirable when, due to numbers of candidates and personnel, Confirmation can only be scheduled every three years in the parish. Clustering will allow for more frequent celebration of the sacrament and fewer grade levels preparing for Confirmation at one time, which should result in more effective catechesis for the candidate.

G. When young people to be confirmed are attending a Catholic high school, it is incumbent upon parish and high school personnel and programs to coordinate their preparation efforts.

Ordinarily, informational types of catechesis would take place in the high school and not be repeated for these students. The formational and liturgical events (parent/candidate meetings, service, retreats, rituals, etc.) are to take place within the parish community.

H. Each parish is to obtain from candidates who were not baptized in the current parish of membership, at the beginning of their immediate catechesis, a certified copy of their Baptismal Certificate from the parish of baptism. [Canons 894-895]

- This certificate provides proof of Baptism and the information needed for notification after Confirmation. (See sample forms in Appendix III for obtaining each candidate's Certificate of

Baptism, pages F8-F9.)

IV.2.3 The Celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation

A. Rituals used for baptized adults being initiated into the Catholic Church, as found in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, are to be used as a model for the rituals for Confirmation. These rituals are to be celebrated liturgically with the involvement of the entire parish community. All rites reserved for the catechumens are not to be used for Confirmation candidates.

- Model rituals are found in the resource section. Parishes/Clusters are encouraged to use the rites of Welcoming Candidates for Confirmation and Calling to Continued Conversion the Candidates for Confirmation.

B. The right of the candidate to postpone Confirmation is to be respected by parents and pastors. The parish has the responsibility to maintain contact with the candidate. Pastor and parents may delay the celebration of Confirmation due to serious pastoral concerns with the benefit of the doubt given to the candidate.

- Before, during, or after the catechesis issues may arise that may leave some people, including pastors, Directors of Education, and catechists in doubt about the candidate's readiness. The ultimate decision whether the candidate is admitted to the Sacrament belongs to the candidate. This decision is to be informed by and made in collaboration with parents, guardians, pastor, coordinator, and catechists. If the candidate has received adequate catechesis and has participated at a satisfactory level, the candidate is not to be deprived of the right to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation. In cases where there is doubt about the readiness of the candidate to be confirmed, the benefit of the doubt is to be given to the candidate. That is, when the candidate exhibits even a very basic understanding of the Sacraments of Initiation, the candidate is to be confirmed. This is a good time to allow God to interact with the candidate. Furthermore, Confirmation cannot be denied because a candidate's parents are in an irregular marriage (e.g., parents do not practice the faith or were married outside of the church without proper dispensations). Nor may Confirmation be denied or delayed because the candidate's parents are not registered in the parish. Some of these issues may raise questions about a candidate's readiness, but are not to be used to deny the candidate's baptismal right to be confirmed.

C. Each person to be confirmed must have a sponsor. The sponsor is a person chosen by the candidate and is to be responsible for the individual candidate before and after the celebration of the sacrament. The sponsor must be a baptized Roman Catholic having celebrated both First Eucharist and Confirmation and be at least sixteen years of age. He/she must be leading a life in harmony with the Catholic faith, free to celebrate the sacraments, and not bound by any canonical penalty. Sponsors must be ready to commit time and personal care necessary to nurture and support the candidate in the faith. Sponsors cannot be a parent of the one to be confirmed. A sponsor can be either male or female. The sponsor may be the same person as the baptismal godparent of the child. This is desirable. A baptized, non-Catholic Christian cannot be chosen as a sponsor at Confirmation.

- Please see the sponsor guidelines and qualifications in the Parent Meeting materials.
- If it is not possible for a desired sponsor to fulfill expectations due to distance but is desired for family reasons a local sponsor/mentor can be chosen as a proxy to fulfill the expectations with the understanding that the desired sponsor fulfills the obligations at the Rite of Confirmation. Proxies must have the same qualifications as the sponsor.
- Spouses may serve as a sponsor.
- For a just cause, a member of the Oriental Church (Eastern Orthodox Churches) may serve as a sponsor. [See Baptism IV.1.4]
- For persons not eligible to be a sponsor see a list of "SOME CHURCHES WITHOUT VALID BAPTISM," see Appendix, CCR 1-2.

- D. The celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation is to be celebrated within an Eucharistic celebration in order to express more clearly the fundamental connection of Confirmation with the entire process of Christian Initiation. The celebration should take place with the active participation of the community.**
- Planning and celebration of this liturgy should include representation from throughout the parish/cluster, including Eucharistic ministers, lectors, musicians, cantors, etc.
 - Guidelines for the celebration of Confirmation can be found in the Parent Meeting Materials.
- E. Although the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation preferably takes place during the Easter season, the time of celebration will take place according to the Bishop's schedule.**
- Parishes/clusters may consider the celebration of Confirmation annually or bi-annually in order to provide the spiritual benefits from a more frequent celebration for both the candidate and the Christian faithful. Clustering for the celebration may give opportunity for more frequent celebration.
 - Parishes/clusters may make requests for the time of the celebration for the Bishop's consideration. These requests should be made at least six (6) months in advance.
- F. The celebration of Confirmation is to take place in a parish church. Confirmation is not permitted in private homes and in oratories. Confirmation is not permitted in chapels without the approval of the pastor of the parish in which the chapel is located. Celebrations as a cluster are encouraged in consideration of the Bishop's schedule.**
- G. After the celebration of Confirmation, the date and presiding bishop (or priest), the names of the confirmands, the confirmands' confirmation names, and the names of confirmands' sponsors are to be recorded in the parish Confirmation Record book as soon as possible.**
- A form is included in Appendix III, page F10, to help with the recording of the names.
 - If Confirmation is celebrated as a cluster, the Confirmation record is maintained in the parish of the individual confirmand, not the parish where Confirmation is celebrated. The host parish is not responsible for recording the names of confirmands from other parishes within the cluster. Each parish is responsible for recording its own confirmands.
 - If a candidate cannot attend his/her parish/cluster celebration and arrangements are made for that individual to be confirmed in another parish, the Confirmation record is kept in the parish where the Confirmation occurs.
- H. The parish where Confirmation is recorded is responsible for entering the Confirmation record on the Baptismal record or notifying the church of Baptism if the confirmand's baptism did not occur in that parish.**
- For confirmands baptized outside their present parish, notification of the parish where the confirmand was baptized is to be done as soon as possible after the celebration. Responsibility rests with the parish of the confirmand.
 - The Coordinator of the Confirmation team is responsible for notifying the confirmand's pastor so this recording and notification of other parishes can be done.
 - A form is included in Appendix III, page F11, to help with the proper notification of pastors.
- I. Following Confirmation, a parish should provide opportunities for continued study, spiritual growth, and service. Specifically, the parish should be prepared in practical ways to welcome the participation of the confirmand into the life and activity of the parish, including ministries.**
- An already established comprehensive youth ministry can be of great assistance in facilitating this integration into parish life.
 - A confirmed youth, sixteen years of age or older, may serve as an Extraordinary Minister of the

Eucharist.

IV.2.4 Persons with Disabilities

- A. Baptism, the sacrament of universal salvation, gives a person the right to participate in the sacraments. Thus persons who freely ask for it, are properly disposed, and are not prohibited by law from celebrating the sacrament are to be permitted to celebrate their Confirmation. Disability itself is never a reason for deferring the celebration of Confirmation. A doubt about a candidate's use of reason or sufficient disposition should be resolved in favor of the person to be confirmed. Confirmation may be deferred only when there is certainty that the person has not attained the use of reason or is not sufficiently disposed to be confirmed. [Canon 914]**
- Because of the sacramental rights that Baptism gives us, persons who are not forbidden to participate and who are properly prepared and ready are not to be denied the participation in the sacraments. Thus, adequate and appropriate catechesis is to be provided to all persons regardless of abilities. This may require special instructional materials, time, and catechists in order that the child is given a basic understanding of Confirmation.
 - Desire may be expressed by a family member, loved one, or an advocate on behalf of the person with developmental disabilities who is unable to express the desire in a manner that can be discerned by others.
- B. Whatever the disability (illness, injury, mental, or physical) and whatever the number of persons in the parish, religious education of these members of the faithful shall not be neglected. Appropriate adaptations for their special situations and needs are to be made. [Canon 777, 4°]**
- If appropriate adaptations are made for the person's special situations and needs, the celebration of the sacrament cannot be delayed or denied unless there is certainty that the child is not able to participate. In cases where there are doubts about the child's abilities, the child is to be admitted to the celebration of the sacrament.