

JESUS died on the cross to save us. He instituted the Church to carry out His work of Salvation. Through the Church, He gave us seven concrete ways to share in His life; these are the Sacraments of the Catholic Church. In each of the seven sacraments, we receive God's life and God's help.



CONFIRMATION is a sacrament of initiation that is closely connected to Baptism and Eucharist.

CCC 1285 *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."*



Confirmation completes and deepens the grace of Baptism and leads us to the Eucharist.

EUCCHARIST is the culmination of full initiation into the Catholic Church.

Like Baptism, Confirmation is received only once, for it leaves an indelible spiritual mark on the soul. Like Baptism, Confirmation is a free gift of grace that comes from the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

A WALK THROUGH HISTORY

In the first centuries, Confirmation generally comprised one single celebration with Baptism. When adults and children were received into the church at the Easter Vigil celebration, it was one event. As people emerged from the water, symbolic of dying to Christ, the new life they received was sealed (*chrismated*) through anointing with oil by the bishop. At the same celebration, they were welcomed to the table of the Lord (Eucharist).

Early in the Church a custom developed for infant baptisms in regards to the anointing of the newly baptized by the priest immediately after baptism and a second anointing, years later, completing the baptism performed by the bishop. In the West, the desire to reserve this second anointing to the bishop caused a separation of the celebration of the two sacraments. The Eastern Church decided that the bishop or priest who baptized would also anoint.

Throughout the centuries, the time lapse between baptism and confirmation grew until confirmation was celebrated around the age of 14.



Eucharist was still celebrated after Confirmation.

Pope Pius X lowered the age of Eucharist to the age of discretion (age 7) but did not address the issue of Confirmation. This resulted in Confirmation being placed at the end of the initiation sequence.

The Second Vatican Council called for a revision of the Rite of Confirmation that reflected its close connection to Baptism.

In 1972 The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) was promulgated. In this Rite un-baptized adults and children of catechetical age are to be fully initiated, celebrating baptism, confirmation and Eucharist at the same celebration.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has stated that, in the United States, Confirmation may be celebrated anytime between the ages of 7 and 16, within the limits determined by the diocesan bishop.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PARENTS

Parents are the primary educators of their children. In celebrating the Rite of Baptism of Infants, parents publicly commit to forming their children in the life of faith. Parents are addressed:



"Parents, you have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training them in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to bring him/her up to keep God's commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and neighbor (RB # 39)."

"Training them in the practice of the faith" includes seeing that your child receives Confirmation and

Eucharist. Parish or school programs of religious formation (K-12) assist parents in this most important responsibility but never replace the rightful role of the parents in faith formation.

A child learns a life of faith from their family.

One of the most significant ways to help your child prepare for Confirmation is to participate in weekly Sunday Mass. If children see that their parents have a strong connection with the Church and take their faith seriously, they will naturally follow their example. At home the connection can be made between faith and life by saying grace before meals, having holy water, crucifixes and other sacred images in the home, and making sure the Bible and the Catechism of the Catholic Church are natural resources for reflection and guidance. Your parish can also recommend further materials.

THE ROLE OF PARENTS & PARISH

- Preparation for any sacrament is a journey of the heart to prepare to meet Jesus Christ. It involves reflection, deeper conversion, prayer and faith sharing with others.
- Immediate catechesis for the sacrament of Confirmation in the Diocese of Fargo is to include:
 - 2 parent sessions
 - 1 retreat
 - 1 interview
 - the regular faith formation sessions provided by the parish.
- Confirmation is **not** 'graduation' from religious education but rather sets the stage for ongoing formation.
- **Faith formation is a life-long process**

THE ROLE OF SPONSORS

• Sponsors are to have an active role in the faith life and preparation of the candidate (pray together, attend classes and the retreat together, etc).



• Sponsors may not be the natural or adoptive parents of the candidate.

• It is preferable for the Godparents to be the sponsors at confirmation. This manifests clearly the connection between baptism and confirmation. Others

may, however, be asked to fulfill this role.

- Sponsors must be 16 years old, fully initiated (baptized, confirmed and received Eucharist) and a practicing member of a parish faith community.
- Sponsors must be leading a life in harmony with the Catholic Faith and free of any canonical impediments.

CONFIRMATION NAME/PATRON SAINT

A name is used in Confirmation. “*N*, be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (RC # 27) This name must be *either* your child’s formal Baptismal name or a different saint’s name (specifically chosen). The SAINTS have gone before us as examples. If chosen, the saint becomes their special patron and can be called upon in prayer to intercede for them.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

- Send Forth Your Spirit by Bishop Samuel J. Aquila at www.fargodiocese.org
- Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs # 1285-1321
- Diocesan Office of Evangelization and Catechesis (701) 356-7908



A GUIDE FOR PARENTS



CONFIRMATION PREPARATION

in

THE DIOCESE OF FARGO

The Office of Evangelization & Catechesis