

Incarnate Word Confirmation Sponsor Conversation Form B

Actions:

1. Read "Topic B: Learning from the Rite of Confirmation."
2. Talk with your sponsor.
 - What does your sponsor remember from his/her Confirmation Mass?
 - Discuss the outline of the Rite given in the Topic B text.
 - What do you think is the most interesting part of the Rite or reason behind it?
3. Write a summary of what you discussed in two paragraphs or more, and attach as separate sheet.



Confirmation Candidate's Name: _____
Please print first and last name.

Date Sponsor Meeting Occurred: ____ / ____ / ____

Sponsor's Name: _____

Sponsor's Signature: _____
**If the interview took place by phone or email, parent may sign for sponsor.*

Topic B: Learning from the Rite of Confirmation

We're going to look closely at the actual Rite of Confirmation – what happens during the Confirmation Mass – not to practice, but to understand it. The Church has a reason for everything we do, and the words and actions of our liturgical* prayers are carefully chosen and come from the Bible and our Tradition. In fact, if you just listened to the Mass very carefully each week and thought about what was prayed, you'd eventually have a pretty good idea of what Catholics believe about most things (our place in the world, who Christ is, the role of the Holy Spirit, etc.).

General questions to consider:

- *We call this our "Confirmation" – so who's doing the confirming?*

We say "I'm being confirmed" for a reason, not "I'm confirming." This sacrament isn't about *your* decision to continue with your faith, although you do have to choose to show up and cooperate with God. This sacrament is about God's decision to give you the Holy Spirit and his call for you to live more fully as a contributing member of his Church, which is why God is the one who confirms you through his representative, the bishop.

- *If God confirms, then why are all of the physical elements necessary? Why bother with coming together, working with the bishop's schedule, and using the oil? Why not have the pastor say, "God confirmed you over the weekend!" and eliminate the ritual and all of its elements?*

In short, because we are physical beings. God created us with bodies, and our bodies should be as much a part of this process as our souls are. God could confirm us without a ritual, but He knows that it feels a lot more "real" to us to actually *speak* our baptismal promises, *feel* our sponsor's hand on our shoulder, *hear* the words of the bishop, and *see, feel, and smell* ourselves being anointed with oil.

Presentation of Candidates:

After the Gospel, the bishop is seated. **The Pastor or his delegate presents the candidates for Confirmation.** The candidates stand. (Candidates may be presented individually or as a group.) They remain standing until the bishop instructs them to be seated. The homily follows.

- *Why does the pastor present the candidates for Confirmation?*

"Pastor" is a very specific responsibility for a parish and its people. Within the Church, it means that he truly has a specific responsibility to care for your souls, which includes making sure that you are fully prepared for the sacraments you receive. When he presents you, it is an official way of saying that he has seen that you are ready for this, and the bishop accepts this testimony from him.

*The usual meaning of *liturgy* is the prayer of the Church we do in common with everyone throughout the world – so this includes the Mass, all of our sacraments, the "liturgy of the hours" which can be prayed throughout the day, etc.

Renewal of Baptismal Promises:

The candidates stand. They are the only ones who renew their Baptismal promises.

After the homily the candidate stands and the celebrant questions him (her): *Do you reject Satan, and all his works, and all his empty promises?*

The candidate responds: *I do.*

Celebrant: *Do you believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth?*

Candidate: *I do.*

Celebrant: *Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, died, and was buried, rose from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father?*

Candidate: *I do.*

Celebrant: *Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who came upon the apostles at Pentecost and today is given to you sacramentally in confirmation?*

Candidate: *I do.*

Celebrant: *Do you believe in the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?*

Candidate: *I do.*

The celebrant confirms their profession of faith by proclaiming the faith of the Church.

This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The whole congregation responds: *Amen.*

- When Confirmation is celebrated separately from Baptism,* the Confirmation Rite begins with the renewal of baptismal promises and the profession of faith by the confirmandi (you).
- These connections or reminders of our baptism show that **Confirmation follows Baptism**.

**Roman Catholics who were baptized as babies usually have these two separate celebrations of Baptism and Confirmation. If you know someone who is Orthodox, or who became Catholic as an adult, they were probably confirmed immediately after their Baptism. This only makes sense if the sacrament is really about God's call/gift, not our own decision to keep being Catholic!*

- An added benefit of having you profess our faith during the rite: The bishop can hear your statement of faith – i.e, that you know what you're getting into and that you want this for yourself.
- In this rite, we actually add one statement to the traditional promises from Baptism – the one asking about belief in the **Holy Spirit**.

Laying on of Hands:

The bishop faces the people and with hands joined, sings or says:

My dear friends; in baptism God our Father gave the new birth of eternal life to his chosen sons and daughters. Let us pray to our father that he will pour out the Holy Spirit to strengthen his sons and daughters with his gifts, and anoint them to be more like Christ, the Son of God.

All pray in silence for a short time.

The bishop extends his hands over the whole group of the confirmands, and prays:

*All-powerful God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
by water and the Holy Spirit
you freed your sons and daughters from sin
and gave them new life.
Send your Holy Spirit upon them
to be their helper and guide.
Give them the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of right judgment and courage,
the spirit of knowledge and reverence.
Fill them with the spirit of wonder and awe in your presence.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.*

- Since the time of the apostles (!) this gesture of outstretched hands has signified calling down the gift of the Spirit. You can see that the bishop asks for the outpouring of the Spirit in this prayer.
We also see this same gesture in the Mass – the priest holds his hands outstretched over the gifts on the altar, as he prays that the Holy Spirit be sent down to consecrate them into Jesus' Body and Blood.



Anointing with Chrism:

The Sponsor places his/her right hand on the candidate's right shoulder during the Rite of Confirmation.

The candidate, sponsor or pastor announces the Confirmation name of the candidate.

The bishop anoints the candidate with chrism and says, *"Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

The candidate responds, *"Amen."*

The bishop concludes by saying, *"Peace be with you."*

The candidate responds by saying, *"And with your spirit."*

- *What is the meaning of the anointing with chrism?*

Anointing, in Biblical and other ancient symbolism, has many meanings. “Christ” actually means “anointed one.” In ancient times:

- Oil is a sign of abundance and joy;
- Oil cleanses (historically, people were anointed with oil before and after a bath) and limbers (the anointing of athletes and wrestlers before a match);
- Oil is a sign of healing, since it soothes bruises and wounds;
- Oil makes the anointed person radiant with beauty, health, and strength.

In the Catholic sacraments, anointing with oil also has all these meanings.

- The pre-baptismal anointing with the oil of catechumens (OC) signifies cleansing and strengthening;
- The oil of invalids (OI) in the anointing of the sick expresses healing and comfort.
- The post-baptismal anointing with sacred chrism (SC) in Confirmation and ordination is the sign of consecration.



Why does God do this? We are anointed to be “*the aroma of Christ for God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.*” (2 Cor 2:15). That’s a delightful image – we are supposed to remind others of God like a pleasing smell. (Have you ever smelled chrism oil? It smells great.)

- By this anointing you receive the “mark,” or the *seal* of God.

A seal is a symbol of a person, a sign of personal authority, or ownership of an object. It was also a guarantee of that person’s protection. Roman soldiers were marked with their leader’s seal, and documents were marked with the seal of the person whose authority gave them meaning. *(To the right is an envelope sealed by an American Embassy – the seal is meant to guarantee the document’s authority and authenticity.)*



- Jesus himself declared that he was marked with his Father’s seal in John 6:27.
- Christians are also marked with a seal; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 says, *“It is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has commissioned us; he has put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.”*
Here, we see that when we are anointed, God
 - 1) claims us as his, and
 - 2) expects us to do his work, but...
 - 3) gives us his Spirit for protection and for help.



The words of the rite are important too. The bishop says, “**Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit,**” not “I seal you with the gift of the Holy Spirit.” The verb tense gives us a clue that the bishop is not doing the sealing – God is – and the bishop stands as the representative of his Church.