

Confirmation Preparation in the Diocese of Madison

Preparation for the sacraments should be distinct from regular, ongoing formation in the faith. Specifically, Confirmation preparation should not take the place of an entire year (or multiple years) of high school formation in a parish.

Personal Expectations - In order to be Confirmed, one must be baptized, of the age of reason, suitably instructed, properly disposed, and able to renew the baptismal promises (CIC 889). It is expected that individuals who are preparing for the sacrament of Confirmation are practicing the faith and obedient to the precepts of the Church.

Parent Commitment - Parents are the primary educators of their children in the faith. It is expected that every parent of a Confirmandi understands the preparation process and joins in committing to help form their child(ren) during this process. (For example, parishes may ask parents to sign a commitment form at the parent information meeting, once they have reviewed the expectation to play a significant role in the Confirmation preparation process.)¹

Remote Preparation - Remote preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation ideally takes place at least two years prior to the reception of the sacrament. Throughout each of these years, teens are expected to engage in regular, religious education or youth formation. This remote preparation could happen in the parish, in a Catholic school, and/or in the home. This preparation should be focused on providing organic, systematic catechesis, with a particular emphasis on studying the four pillars of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

Immediate Preparation - In the two semesters leading to Confirmation, there should be 12 hours of immediate preparation offered for the sacrament of Confirmation in the home parish.

One-on-One Interview - In order to ensure that candidate has been suitably instructed and is properly disposed, the pastor (or his delegate) should meet one-on-one with each person seeking the sacrament. This conversation should include a review of the baptismal promises the candidate will renew at their Confirmation, so as to ensure basic knowledge of the Church's teachings and intent to live according to those teachings. Ideally this happens midway through the preparation process, in case the suggestion is made to delay reception of the sacrament.

Curriculum & Materials - Every parish is expected to follow the curriculum guidelines for Confirmation. The Office of Evangelization and Catechesis is available to consult on which materials would be suitable tools to teach according to those guidelines.

¹ The preparation of children for the reception of the sacraments is a work of cooperation between pastors and parents, each of whom has, in his own way, both the right and the duty of educating Christian children. The Church joyfully affirms that parents are the "principal and first educators of their children" (CCC 1653) and the "first heralds" for them of the Gospel (CCC 2225). Yet this primary right of parents to educate their children is not absolute. In matters of faith and morals, it is subordinate to the authority of the Church. For Christian education "belongs preeminently to the Church," (Pope Pius XI, *On Christian Education*, 15) both because of the authority given to her by Christ to teach all nations (Matt 28:18-20) and because she is the spiritual mother of all those who are born of the waters of Baptism (Pope Pius XI, *On Christian Education*, 16-17). Just as parents have a natural right and duty to educate the children born to them by nature, so also the Church has a supernatural right and duty to educate all the children born to her by grace. All the Christian faithful have a right to receive the sacraments, and hence cannot be denied the sacraments as long as they fulfill the basic requirements of canon law. Parents and pastors together are responsible for ensuring that children receive suitable instruction prior to reception of the sacraments, but it is for the pastor to judge that the children are properly disposed and suitably instructed, in accord with the canonical norms, before allowing them to receive the sacraments.

Pastors and parents alike should not be content with merely fulfilling minimum requirements, but should seek to provide vigorous and robust catechesis aimed at a deeply rooted and lively faith. Parents and pastors are called to work harmoniously together in fulfilling the evangelizing mission of the Church, taking joint responsibility for the sacramental preparation of children, as well as for the good of the whole parish. Thus, parents ought to carefully discern their call to enrich the parish community through their engagement and active participation in parish catechetical programs, and pastors ought to, while acknowledging and respecting the rights and freedoms of the family, gently encourage them to use their gifts for the advancement of the whole parish community.

FORMATION LEADING TO THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

The following chart is based on Confirmation occurring during Spring of 9th grade or Fall of 10th grade. Appropriate modifications should be made for candidates seeking the sacrament at other ages.

	Spring 9th Grade Confirmation	Fall 10th Grade Confirmation
Preceding Semesters	- Young people regularly attend youth formation in the parish and/or are enrolled in a Catholic school or receive religious formation at home.	- Young people regularly attend youth formation in the parish and/or are enrolled in a Catholic school or receive religious formation at home.
Semester 1	Fall 8th Grade - Teens regularly attend youth formation in the parish and/or are enrolled in a Catholic school or receive religious formation at home.	Spring 8th Grade - Teens regularly attend youth formation in the parish and/or are enrolled in a Catholic school or receive religious formation at home.
Semester 2	Spring 8th Grade - Teens regularly attend youth formation in the parish and/or are enrolled in a Catholic school or receive religious formation at home.	Fall 9th Grade - Teens regularly attend youth formation in the parish and/or are enrolled in a Catholic school or receive religious formation at home.
Semester 3	Fall 9th Grade - Teens regularly attend youth formation in the parish and/or are enrolled in a Catholic school or receive religious formation at home. - Immediate Confirmation preparation sessions with parents: 6 hours. - One-on-one interviews with the candidate and Pastor, DRE, or Confirmation Catechist.	Spring 9th Grade - Teens regularly attend youth formation in the parish and/or are enrolled in a Catholic school or receive religious formation at home. - Immediate Confirmation preparation sessions with parents: 6 hours. - One-on-one interviews with the candidate and Pastor, DRE, or Confirmation Catechist.
Semester 4	Spring 9th Grade - Teens regularly attend youth formation in the parish and/or are enrolled in a Catholic school or receive religious formation at home. - Immediate Confirmation preparation sessions with sponsors: 6 hours. - If needed: a second one-on-one interview with the candidate and Pastor, DRE, or Confirmation Catechist. - Confirmation rehearsal. - Provide ample opportunities for candidates to go to Confession. - Celebration of the sacrament!	Fall 10th Grade - Teens regularly attend youth formation in the parish and/or are enrolled in a Catholic school or receive religious formation at home. - Immediate Confirmation preparation sessions with sponsors: 6 hours. - If needed: a second one-on-one interview with the candidate and Pastor, DRE, or Confirmation Catechist. - Confirmation rehearsal. - Provide ample opportunities for candidates to go to Confession. - Celebration of the sacrament!
Following Semesters	- Teens regularly attend youth formation in the parish and/or are enrolled in a Catholic school or receive religious formation at home.	- Teens regularly attend youth formation in the parish and/or are enrolled in a Catholic school or receive religious formation at home.

The items in red are mandatory in preparing Confirmands for the sacrament of Confirmation.

The items in green are expected of all parishes to offer as immediate preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation.

Name at Confirmation - It is a common pious practice to select the name a Saint or Blessed to take at their Confirmation; this choice is often of a member of the Church triumphant the confirmand would like the intercession of or one whom they desire to emulate. Bishop Hying will likely ask each Confirmand about the name they chose before they are Confirmed. Confirmandi should be well prepared for that brief conversation.

Letters of Intent - Bishop Hying would like for letters to be written to him by all Confirmandi. They should be mailed directly in one packet to the Bishop at least 30 days prior to the date of Confirmation. Please do not fold the letters nor place them in individual envelopes. Letters of intent MIGHT include:

- The candidate's desire to be confirmed.
- Sharing their faith: past and present.
- What effects they hope the sacrament of Confirmation has on their faith and lives in the future.
- How they see themselves participating in the mission of the Church after receiving the sacrament.
- Candidate letters should be read by someone on the parish staff to ensure that the letter requests the Sacrament and that the person is acting freely.

Bishop Hying personally reads each letter so that he can better know the thoughts, concerns, and desires of young people.

Sponsor Involvement & Formation - Each person who is seeking the Sacrament of Confirmation is to choose a sponsor, according to canons 874, 892, and 893. Following those guidelines, Confirmandi should choose a sponsor who is fit to participate with them in the formation leading up to the sacrament. (For example, they may attend formation sessions, go to Mass together, pray together at Adoration, make plans to go to Confession together, and check in with each other regularly.).

Retreat - Regular retreats are helpful and encouraged as a spiritual practice in the lives of the faithful. Specifically, kerygmatic retreats can be fruitful in helping someone come to know Jesus Christ and follow him. While retreats are beneficial in the Christian life, Confirmandi may not be required to participate in a retreat as part of the preparation process.

Missionary Formation - Being a Catholic involves a lifelong commitment to discipleship and mission. While the hope is that every person who presents themselves for Confirmation takes that seriously, Confirmandi may not be required to participate in service or mission work as part of the preparation process.

Special Circumstances & Requests

Each parish should have in place a plan to accommodate the following special circumstances or requests.

Celebration of the Sacrament for a Child Above the Age of Reason and Younger than the Normative Age

Parents may request the sacrament of Confirmation for a child over the age of reason who is suitably instructed and properly disposed to receive the sacrament. Families requesting this permission must contact the pastor and parish catechetical leader responsible for Confirmation to learn about the appropriate steps to be taken. (As is the expectation for children preparing for their first Reconciliation and first Communion, they are to be enrolled in the parish religious education program, a Catholic school, or home school religion classes for at least one year prior to the immediate preparation for the sacrament.) These younger children will be confirmed with all others in their parish seeking Confirmation.

Formation for the Sacrament for Individuals with Varying Abilities

Individuals with disabilities are able to be formed and receive the sacrament of Confirmation. See the *Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities* by the USCCB for more instruction. Materials for preparation are available in the OEC for review.