

Guidelines for
Parish Confirmation:
Candidates
Priests/Deacons
Coordinators/Catechetical
Leaders/Youth Ministers



Diocese of Des Moines
Department of Evangelization & Catechesis
Office for Worship

September 14, 2020

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September 14, 2020
Feast of the Triumph of the Cross

The Sacrament of Confirmation

* * *

Dear Friends in Christ,

When Jesus first encounters Nicodemus, they quickly discuss what it means to be “born from above.” Jesus elaborates: “The wind blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit” (John 3:4-8).

As Catholic Christians, we believe it is in the Sacrament of Baptism that we are first “born from above.” We also believe that this Spirit mysteriously continues to blow into the hearts and minds of each of us, including you, our young people. God wills that we continually deepen our relationship with Jesus enfolded by the love of the Holy Trinity. Here we can hear God’s unique and personal call to us and witness to his Risen presence, his Kingdom among us. As Pope Francis says, we do not HAVE a mission; each of us IS a mission, sent by God.

The Holy Spirit is the source of this Kingdom life and our capacity to give faithful witness. Jesus calls this gift the “Paraclete,” which can be translated as “advocate,” “comforter,” “consoler”—or in a more vivid translation: “the one who answers the call.” God is calling you. Will you answer? The Spirit helps us overcome our fears or reluctance to say, “Yes!”

The Sacrament of Confirmation, to be conferred in tenth grade or older in the Diocese of Des Moines, is a sacred moment when you are enabled to recognize and respond to God’s call. God’s Holy Spirit communicates seven significant gifts anticipated by the prophet Isaiah: Wisdom, Understanding, Knowledge, Piety/Devotion, Courage, Counsel, and the Obedient Love (versus enslaved fear) of an adopted daughter or son.

Preparation is key to experiencing the effects of the Sacrament. Guided by caring and dedicated adults who love you and believe in you, the ideal timeframe for preparation is two years. Three elements that constitute formation during this period are:

- More mature formation in the faith and what it means to live as a missionary disciple;

- Cultivation of a prayer life that emphasizes a personal relationship with Jesus as friend, Savior and Lord of Life. Well-planned retreats and other moments of personal encounter centered in the Eucharist (Mass, adoration) are vital in facilitating this growth in friendship and dependency on God.
- Service of others--especially the poor, the vulnerable, those at the margins of society--is companion to our participation in sacraments. As mutual members of the Body of Christ, we nourish life in others just as we are fed by Jesus himself.

Wherever possible, the format of small groups is to be used for instruction since it achieves a more lasting personal impression for each confirmand.

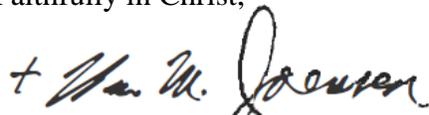
An opening prayer service at the beginning of the Confirmation preparation process will introduce the upcoming journey and each of its phases. The grace of the Sacrament of Reconciliation—itsself a renewal of one’s baptism--should be promoted and made available (whether as part of regular parish opportunities or special celebrations) to confirmation candidates, their sponsors and family members at various points throughout the process-- especially in the period immediately leading up to (less than one month is ideal) the celebration of Confirmation.

Finally, in the weeks before the celebration of Confirmation, it is good to join together for a prayer “Vigil” that evokes the Easter Vigil, involving candidates, their families and the sponsors.

One of my great joys as bishop is to celebrate the wonder-filled sacrament of Confirmation with young people and their families. The Diocese of Des Moines places great trust and hope in you as you become the pivotal next generation to take up your call in Christ as servants, leaders, and lovers of God among us.

In this time of pandemic, it is even more vital, young people, that you “Be not afraid!” The Sacrament of Confirmation gives access to the mysterious love and life of Jesus and his Father through the gift of their Spirit—a pearl of great price we would be foolish to forsake. You are not fools, but wise in Christ. Come, Holy Spirit!

Faithfully in Christ,



Most Rev. William M. Joensen, Ph.D.
Bishop of Des Moines

Diocese of Des Moines Age for the Conferral of the Sacrament of Confirmation Guiding Principles

September 14, 2020

Dear Reverend Fathers, Reverend Deacons, Catechetical Leaders, Youth Ministers, Volunteers and Parents:

In support of Emeritus Bishop Pates' 'pastoral initiative rooted in the resolution of the Presbyteral Council to establish the celebration of Confirmation in the sophomore through senior years of high school, the Diocese of Des Moines' Department of Evangelization and Catechesis offers three guiding principles for developing this sacramental process at your local parish:

1. The Confirmation preparation process should always be parish-based and involve the entire parish community.

Formation for Confirmation should move the candidate toward a sense of belonging to the universal Catholic Church as well as the local parish community. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that the entire parish community "bears special responsibility for the preparation of the confirmands." (CCC 1309) This process is pastorally situated within the parish because the confirmandi will experience their lifelong faith relationships in a parish community. The entire Church is called to structurally and personally support a commitment to lifelong faith formation. A solid parish preparatory process will be a bridge for the confirmandi to the larger parish community and help them see that lifelong faith formation includes a connection to a parish.

2. The conferring of the Sacrament of Confirmation should be attentive to the readiness of the candidate and enable their readiness.
3. Confirmation preparation should be seen as a "significant moment" within the process of adolescent catechesis which takes place during the four years of high school and celebrated in the 10th, 11th or 12th grade. This process as a whole, continues to support a vision of lifelong formation in faith.

The Diocesan Department of Evangelization and Catechesis will collaborate with local parish communities to make sure the sacramental preparatory process is situated within a holistic approach to ministry with youth. The goal of the work of the Church with the young disciple is to develop a deeper awareness of what it means to accept the grace begun at baptism and put that grace into action.

Confirmation is one important component of a comprehensive model for ministry with our young people. The Department of Evangelization and Catechesis proposes a Confirmation preparation process which includes opportunities to: participate in the prayer life of the Church, the opportunity

to walk in Jesus' footsteps in making moral decisions, the opportunity to share their gifts with the larger community, nurturing a sense of justice and service, opportunities for pastoral care, and entering into the broader mission of the Church through evangelization and advocacy. The purpose of this holistic formation is for the confirmandi to have the intention of receiving the sacrament fully. "A candidate for Confirmation ...must profess the faith, be in the state of grace, and have the intention of receiving the sacrament, and be prepared to assume the role of disciple and witness to Christ, both within the ecclesial community and in temporal affairs." (CCC 1319)

As we proceed in the sacramental preparation process for Confirmation, let us pray for the young Catholic Church. Never before have our youth been under such pressure to conform to the materialistic values of the American culture. Our local parish communities have worked hard to bring the voice of the Gospel into a work in desperate need of sacrificial love, humility of spirit, and justice. The Diocesan Department of Evangelization and Catechesis is at the service of every parish community as we work together during this period of transition.

Respectfully in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John L. Gaffney". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "J".

John L. Gaffney,
Director, Department of Evangelization & Catechesis

Introduction



Department of Evangelization & Catechesis Diocese of Des Moines

John Gaffney, Evangelization & Catechesis
Justin White, Director of Youth & Young Adult Ministry

These materials have been designed to assist parish religious education leaders, sacramental coordinators and youth ministers of the Diocese of Des Moines in the preparation for and celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation with 10th grade youth. Although we all belong to one Church, each parish in our diocese is unique. Our parishes are made up of individuals with distinctive gifts and challenges. These resources are meant to be a working guide, not a manual of rules and requirements. It is our hope that each parish's Confirmation Team, working with their pastor, will design and develop a Confirmation Program, based upon these suggestions, that best suits the needs of their parish.

The Department of Evangelization and Catechesis stands ready to serve our parishes as they assist in the faith formation of our high school teens and witness the desire of our teens to grow with each passing day. It is our prayer that all of our parishes enjoy truly Spirit-filled celebrations of Confirmation which bring about renewal and refreshment to the entire parish. Our hearts and hands are ready to help as needed. Each of you remains in our prayers.

Theological Underpinnings

“During his ministry, Jesus frequently promised the outpouring of the Holy Spirit among his disciples. He fulfilled that promise first on Easter Sunday and then more strikingly at Pentecost. In our own day, as a continuance of the grace of Pentecost within the Church, baptized Christians also experience the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the Sacrament of Confirmation” (Receive the Gift: The Age of Confirmation, pg. 1, USCCB ©2004).

“Preparation for Confirmation should aim at leading the Christian toward a more intimate union with Christ and a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit - his actions, his gifts, and his biddings - in order to be more capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities of Christian life. To this end catechesis for Confirmation should strive to awaken a sense of belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ, the universal Church as well as the parish community. The latter bears special responsibility for the preparation of confirmands” (CCC §1309).

“It must be explained . . . 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” (CCC, §1285).

THE EFFECTS OF CONFIRMATION

In the celebration of the sacrament of Confirmation, the anointing with the Sacred Chrism, the imposition of hands, and the prayer over the candidates are the symbols of this sacrament. They provide rich meaning and understanding about the effects of the sacrament on the confirmand.

CCC 1302 It is evident from its celebration that the effect of the sacrament of Confirmation is the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost.

CCC 1303 From this fact, Confirmation brings an increase and deepening of baptismal grace:

- It roots us more deeply in the divine filiation which makes us cry, "Abba! Father!"
- It unites us more firmly to Christ.
- It increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us.
- It renders our bond with the Church more perfect.
- It gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly, and never to be ashamed of the Cross:

Recall then that you have received the spiritual seal, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of right judgment and courage, the spirit of knowledge and reverence, the spirit of holy fear in God's presence. Guard what you have received. God the Father has marked you with his sign; Christ the Lord has confirmed you and has placed his pledge, the Spirit, in your hearts.

CCC 1304 Like Baptism which it completes, Confirmation is given only once, for it too imprints on the soul an indelible spiritual mark, the "character," which is the sign that Jesus Christ has marked a Christian with the seal of his Spirit by clothing him with power from on high so that he may be his witness.

CCC 1305 This "character" perfects the common priesthood of the faithful, received in Baptism, and "the confirmed person receives the power to profess faith in Christ publicly and as it were officially (quasi ex officio)."

SPONSORS FOR CONFIRMATION

Can. 892 As far as possible a sponsor for the one to be confirmed should be present; it is for the sponsor to see that the confirmed person acts as a true witness of Christ and faithfully fulfills the obligations connected with this sacrament.

Can. 893 §1 A person who would undertake the office of sponsor **must fulfill the conditions mentioned in Canon 874.**

§2 It is desirable that the one who undertook the role of sponsor at baptism be sponsor for confirmation.

Since Canon 893 regulates that the qualifications of the Confirmation sponsor are the same as the criteria as for the baptismal godparent, then Canon 874 must be applied.

Can. 874 §1 To be admitted to undertake the role of sponsor, a person must:

1. be designated by the one to be baptized, by the parents or the one who takes their place, or in their absence by the pastor or minister and is to have the qualifications and the intention of performing this role;
2. have completed the sixteenth year of age, unless a different age has been established by the diocesan bishop or it seems to the pastor or minister that an exception is to be made for a just cause;
3. be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the sacrament of the Most Holy Eucharist and leads a life in harmony with the faith and the role to be undertaken;
4. not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared;
5. not be the father or mother of the one to be baptized.

WHO CAN RECEIVE THE SACRAMENT?

A description of who can receive this sacrament may be found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, § 1306 -1311. It is also in the Code of Canon Law.

Can. 842 §1 A person who has not received Baptism cannot be validly admitted to the other sacraments.

§2 The sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Blessed Eucharist so complement one another that all three are required for full Christian Initiation.

Can. 889 §1 Every baptized person not yet confirmed and only such a person is capable of receiving confirmation.

§2 To receive confirmation licitly outside the danger of death requires that a person who has the use of reason be suitably instructed, properly disposed, and able to renew the baptismal promises.

Can. 890 The faithful are obliged to receive this sacrament at the proper time. Parents and pastors of souls, especially pastors of parishes, are to take care that the faithful are properly instructed to receive the sacrament and come to it at the appropriate time.

Diocesan Policy

AGE OF CONFIRMATION

It is the policy of the Diocese of Des Moines that Confirmation is to be celebrated in the 10th grade, effective July 1, 2012. All parishes within the diocese are to adhere to this policy in establishing formation programs for Confirmation.

For parishes who will confirm only tenth graders every year, the Confirmation formation process should begin no earlier than September of the 9th grade. The celebration of the sacrament would occur at a significant moment within the 10th grade.

CONFIRMATION FORMATION PROGRAM

Ideally, a Confirmation Formation program includes:

Spiritual Formation Options (see pg. 11)

Service and Discipleship Options (see pg. 13)

Opportunities for Parent/Sponsor involvement (see pg. 15)

Practical Suggestion for Direction Your Parish Formation Program (see pg. 16)

Reflection upon the sacrament of Confirmation (see pg. 22)

Liturgical (Eucharist) Instruction, Planning & Practicing Confirmation Liturgy (see pg. 23)

Because each parish is different in its resources and challenges, the diocese will not establish policies on the number of classes, events, retreats, or service projects for candidates in order to be confirmed. Confirmation is to be parish based and it is up to the pastor to design the Confirmation Formation Program in his parish.

SPONSORS

Sponsors for the sacrament of Confirmation must meet the conditions outlined in the Code of Canon Law Can. 874 §1 and in this policy. The person admitted to the role of sponsor must:

1. be designated by the one to be confirmed;
2. not be one of the candidate's parents;
3. is to have the qualifications and the intention of performing this role;
4. have completed the sixteenth year of age;
5. be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the
4. Sacrament of the Most Holy Eucharist;
5. be an active, practicing Catholic;
6. be receiving the sacraments of Penance and Communion frequently;
7. be married in the Catholic Church, if married;
8. lead a life in harmony with the faith and the role to be undertaken;

The pastor of the designated sponsor is normally responsible for determining that she/he understands the sponsor's role and is qualified to assume it.

Spiritual Formation Options

Spiritual formation is an essential component of every Confirmation Formation program. The goal of the spiritual formation component of the Confirmation Formation program should be to help the candidates develop their personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The process for spiritual formation can take a variety of forms such as Mass, Eucharistic adoration, small group discussions, scriptural reflection, praying with music, guided meditation, etc. Exposing teens to a variety of prayer forms should be a high priority for every Confirmation Coordinator. A variety of prayer experiences should be intertwined throughout the preparation period, and opportunities for prayer should be offered at every gathering.

Some parishes may choose to have their Confirmation candidates participate in one or more retreats during their period of formation. A retreat may incorporate a variety of different prayer forms, allowing the candidate to experience new or deeper forms of prayer. Longer retreats, such as full day or weekend models, can allow a teen the time to truly “get away” and to communicate with Our Lord in a more substantial way than they may have ever experienced before.

If a retreat experience is an important component of your parish’s Confirmation preparation program it is essential that you offer options to the candidates. At the beginning of the formation program, it may be best to list retreat possibilities with dates, locations, and costs. As teens get older, their schedules get busier. Additionally, parents may have financial concerns, especially if they have more than one child who may be going through the Confirmation Formation program.

The Diocesan Department of Evangelization and Catechesis offers a workshop in planning and directing retreats and prayer experiences. The department also has a number of text resources in their libraries for planning and directing retreats. They have access to a number of web resources. Small parishes may choose to work with neighboring parishes in coordinating and directing retreats. Please call the Youth Ministry Office for assistance at 515-237-5058 in planning or coordinating your retreat.

Retreats available within the Diocese

The Diocesan Confirmation Retreat – Fanning the Flame

This retreat is designed for a one day experience for your confirmation class and chaperones. The Fanning the Flame Retreat will place students in an intimate encounter with Christ and encourage them to choose a relationship with Christ that is lived in the power of the Holy Spirit!

Resources:

The Department of Evangelization and Catechesis has a number of retreat resources available in their libraries. There are several resources available through publishers and subscription services. Many of these resources outline the theme and timetable for the retreat coordinator, giving suggestions for icebreakers, large and small group discussion questions, and an outline on preparing the talks, prayer services and penance services. Below is a list of some of the approved resources available in the Department libraries:

Getaways with God - Youth Retreats for Any Schedule, published by Saint Mary's Press

Youth Retreats for Any Schedule, published by Saint Mary's Press

Oneight Confirmation Program, published by Life Teen

Chosen: Your Journey Toward Confirmation, published by Ascension Press

Decision Point: Confirmation Program, published by Dynamic Catholic

Service and Discipleship Options

“Confirmation deepens our baptismal life that calls us to be missionary witnesses of Jesus Christ in our families, neighborhoods, society, and the world. Through Confirmation, our personal relationship with Christ is strengthened. We receive the message of faith in a deeper and more intensive manner with great emphasis given to the person of Jesus Christ, who asked the Father to give the Holy Spirit to the Church for building up the community in loving service” (United States Catholic Catechism for Adults).

Teens today learn best by “doing” and “experiencing”. As a group, teens are drawn to the experience of service as a way of truly living their faith. Many of our candidates are very involved in service before they come into the Confirmation Formation program. Others however, may need an opportunity to experience their first formal encounter of serving.

The preparation for service and the opportunity to process the experience afterwards are as important as the service experience itself. Teens need to know why and how they will serve. They also need the opportunity to come together afterwards to discuss the experience itself and how this experience affected those they served, the wider community and themselves. It is also important to help the teens make the connection between the experience, our call to serve those in need, and Catholic social teaching.

When considering the service component of your program, determine the end goal, and then consider the best way your program can bring about that goal. Service is not slave labor. Think about offering “service projects” instead of tallying a set number of hours. Consider whether your planned service component looks like “discipleship mentoring” or more like a spreadsheet. Ask yourself if your service component will truly help your candidates become “missionary witnesses of Jesus Christ”?

Pastors and Confirmation Teams may want to consider these points:

- It is a good practice to interview the candidate at the beginning of their journey to discuss our call to serve as disciples and their individual talents. If the candidate is already living the life of a missionary servant in their school, their community and their parish, do they really need to take on additional service? If a candidate needs to have more opportunities to serve, where would their talents best be used? Would they do best working with small children or older adults or by working with their hands repairing homes? Which service opportunities would appeal to them?
- It is good to involve parents and sponsors in service projects as much as possible. It may be best to ask families to take service projects as a family team, giving the parents the tools to prepare their children for the experience and to process the experience afterwards. Possible family projects include: raking leaves for parish shut-ins, making food baskets and delivering them to the poor for St. Vincent DePaul at Thanksgiving and Christmas, and working with the children’s liturgy at the parish.

- Allow a time for the candidates to become familiar with the ministry programs in their parish. Set up a mentoring program with the parish ministries, such as the Liturgy Committee, altar care, music ministry, or a social service committee so that the teens are given the opportunity to work within the parish with an adult to guide them along the way.
- Network with the youth ministers and Confirmation Coordinators of neighboring parishes to share ideas for service projects and to plan combined group service opportunities.
- Before offering any service opportunity, check the location for potential safety and liability concerns.
- Always remember: Adults working with teens must adhere to the Diocese of Des Moines Child Protection Policies and Guidelines.

Parent/Sponsor Meetings

“The catechesis of adults ... is the principal form of catechesis, because it is addressed to persons who have the greatest responsibilities and the capacity to live the Christian message in its fully developed form” (Catechesi Tradendae, 43).

The formation of adults is ongoing throughout their lives, but special moments provide opportunity for deepening one’s understanding and relationship with God. Parental and Sponsor Gatherings in preparation for Confirmation are such opportunities.

The Code of Canon Law reminds us that parents and, likewise, those who are to undertake the office of sponsor “are to be properly instructed on the meaning of the sacrament and the obligations which are attached to it; personally or through others the pastor is to see to it that the parents are properly formed by pastoral directions and by common prayer, gathering several families together and where possible visiting them” (Can 851 §2).

It is important that parents and candidates know and understand the details of the parish Confirmation Formation Program: the dates of meetings, sponsor qualifications, classes, retreats, service projects, practices and the time for the celebration of the Sacrament.

It may be best to have an initial meeting with parents and candidates before the Confirmation preparation process begins to handle these concerns. However, this information is not meant to be the essence of subsequent Parent or Sponsor Gatherings.

See Appendix C: Outlines for Gatherings for optional formats for these gatherings. Remember to have a plan for giving options for parents or sponsors who have difficulty with the scheduled gatherings. Will you offer a make-up session? Will you have the session videotaped? Will there be handouts? You may want to post a video of the meeting and any handouts on the parish website.

Interviews

Although interviewing candidates on an individual basis can be time consuming, the outcome from these interviews is well worth the time and effort invested. Interviews can accomplish different goals depending upon when the interview is conducted. Many pastors and Confirmation Program Coordinators choose to conduct two interviews with their candidates:

- An interview near the beginning of the program to get to know the candidate and to begin talking about the importance of service (This may be an excellent time to determine what service the candidate currently performs.)
- An interview near the end of the preparation program to assess the candidate's readiness/willingness and to allow the candidate an opportunity to reflect on the entire formation process.

In smaller parishes, the interviews may be able to be conducted entirely by the pastor and/or the Confirmation Coordinator. In larger parishes, where there are a large number of candidates, an interview team may be needed. If a team needs to be gathered, care should be taken in selecting interview team members. It is best to gather adults for the interview team who play an active role in the Confirmation Formation or youth ministry program and who communicate well with teens. If two interviews are conducted, it may be helpful if the same person directs both interviews with the teen. In this way, the growth over the Confirmation Formation period may be more easily seen.

Child Protection policies should always be kept in mind when conducting interviews. Interviews should be conducted out of earshot of others, but must be located in a place where both the interviewer and the candidate can be seen by others in the area. Some coordinators choose to interview candidates in the presence of a parent. It is always a good practice to begin and end interviews with a short prayer of intercession and/or thanksgiving.

Early Interview Suggestions:

Think of the interviews at this early stage of the process as opportunities to welcome and provide hospitality for the candidates, not as a form of interrogation about their personal life or faith. This interview should be a time to get to know each other, answer initial questions from the candidate, and begin to talk about service opportunities.

Beginning the interview with a discussion of school, school activities or sports is usually a good place to start. Teens can be nervous during a one-on-one interview such as this, but talking about school, or college sports teams may be a comfortable topic for the candidate. From here, the interviewer can guide the discussion to existing school, community and parish service activities. The interviewer can conclude the discussion with a review of the parish requirements for Confirmation and answer any questions that the candidate may have at this time.

Ending Interview Suggestions:

Whereas the first interview may have been one of welcoming and introduction, this interview may take on a deeper character. This interview should help the candidate discern his/her readiness for the sacrament of Confirmation. The candidate should also be given a chance to talk about the Confirmation Formation process and to examine how she/he has changed during the program. It is a good practice to give the candidates an idea of the scope of the interview before the actual interview date.

Again, remember that the candidate may be somewhat nervous. The interviewer needs to be joyful and welcoming.

Possible interview questions may include:

- What was your favorite part of your Confirmation Formation process? Why?
- What are some of your experiences of prayer?
- What does the celebration of Mass mean to you?
- How have you experienced Jesus in the Sacrament of Penance?
- What is your favorite gift of the Holy Spirit? Tell me about a time you experienced this gift of the Spirit.
- Tell me about some of the service you offered. What did you like best about this experience?
- How is service a sign of your commitment of time and talent to the parish community? If you were to do it again how might it be different?
- What saint's name have you chosen for Confirmation? Why did you choose this name?
- Why did you choose your Confirmation sponsor?
- Why do you wish to be confirmed? What does it mean to you?

From the interview and from the Confirmation Team's regular contact with the candidate, the Confirmation Team should be able to recognize the following indicators of growth in faith: (These indicators are taken from the "outcomes for adolescent faith formation" from the National Initiative on Adolescent Catechesis.)

- Developing a personal relationship with Jesus Christ through regular prayer
- Sharing the Good News through words and actions, and working for peace, justice and human dignity
- Participating fully consciously, actively and regularly in the sacramental life of the Catholic Church (How has this grown? How is it understood in the life of the teen?)
- Articulating the fundamental teachings of the Catholic Faith, and demonstrating a commitment to learning and growing in this faith
- Applying Catholic ethics, virtues, principles, values and social teaching to moral decision-making and life situations
- Discerning and using their gifts to participate in the mission of the parish and larger community
- Exploring God's call to vocation through prayer, reflection and discernment

Specific Interview Challenges

Interviews are a useful vehicle for communication, but challenges can arise during interviews. The following are possible challenges which may arise:

What if the candidate is extremely nervous/upset?

For some teens, interviews are new territory. Other teens may feel intimidated by people in authority. Regardless of the reason, you will have some teens that will be more nervous than others. A small case of nerves can often be calmed with a friendly smile and casual banter beginning the interview. However, if a teen begins to cry, or gets physically ill, it's best to try to determine the root cause of the nervousness and try to put the teen in an environment where he/she may be less anxious. It may be best to delay the interview for another time.

What if the candidate has a disability?

Interviews can be modified or eliminated in order to meet the needs of your disabled candidates. Work with the candidate's parents in order to determine the best plan for persons with developmental or mental disabilities. "Persons with disabilities who may never attain the use of reason are to be encouraged either directly or, if necessary, through their parents or guardian, to receive the sacrament of Confirmation at the appropriate time" (#16, Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities, USCCB). More information can be found on the website of the National Catholic Partnership on Disability: www.ncpd.org.

When should Confirmation be delayed?

When the candidate does not request the sacrament or if a lack of readiness is manifest, Confirmation may be delayed. If it is delayed, the teen and his/her parents should be told clearly what aspect of readiness needs to be demonstrated, how that might be accomplished, and when Confirmation might be expected.

What if a candidate says that they have chosen not to be Confirmed?

If a teen states that he/she does not want to be confirmed, try to determine his/her reasoning. There are many reasons for which a person may decide not to be confirmed. It is not automatically a sign that the person has rejected the faith. Often a refusal for the sacrament is the result of an unanswered question or from misinformation. If the interviewer isn't able to address the teen's concerns immediately, the interviewer should enlist the pastor's help. The pastor can work with the teen and his/her family to determine if the sacrament should be delayed at this time.

Inclusion

In recent years the American Bishops have been writing and encouraging all in the Church in the United States to be respectful of the diversity which is present in our parishes today in language, history, customs, rituals and traditions.

Today the “Catholic Church in the United States embraces the rich cultural pluralism of all the faithful, encourages the distinctive identity of each cultural group, and urges mutual enrichment” (*National Directory for Catechesis*, page 29).

Additionally, we are called to be respectful of people who have physical or mental challenges.

“It is essential that all forms of the liturgy be completely accessible to persons with disabilities, since these forms are the essence of the spiritual tie that binds the Christian community together. To exclude members of the parish from these celebrations of the life of the Church, even by passive omission, is to deny the reality of that community. Accessibility involves far more than physical alterations to parish buildings. Realistic provision must be made for persons with disabilities to participate fully in the Eucharist and other liturgical celebrations such as the sacraments of Reconciliation, Confirmation, and Anointing of the Sick” (*Pastoral Statement of U.S. Catholic Bishops on Persons with Disabilities*, November 1978; revised 1989)

Given these directions, the Confirmation Coordinator should bear in mind these points:

The question we each must ask is: Will this program and liturgical celebration of the sacrament of Confirmation enable all to feel that they are full, participating members of one Faith, one Church in the Lord Jesus Christ?

When planning the formation program and parent meetings:

- Know who will be participating in this program (cultural background, language, abilities, limitations, etc.).
- Recognize those who may have difficulties in English, or in written or spoken language.
- Know if it is necessary to communicate in various ways (verbal as well as written). Consider having translators (including sign language) or offering Braille or large-print worship aids, hymnals and class materials.
- Will there be participants who have any religious customs (such as ethnic traditions) that need to be respected? It is essential to take time to meet with participants and/or leaders from various cultures to understand what some of their expectations might be.
- Note: Particular respect needs to be shown when participants belong to the Eastern Rites of the Catholic Church.

When planning the Confirmation Liturgy:

- Include teens as full participants in the planning of the Confirmation liturgy
- Be aware of the mixture of ages, cultural backgrounds, and languages that will be present at this Confirmation Liturgy. (Remember grandparents, visitors, extended families, etc. will be present.)
- **Allow all teens, including those who use wheelchairs, walkers, etc., to be seated with the entire Confirmation group. Allow all to have the same access to the bishop.**
- Provide information for sponsors and family members in their native language (if needed)
- Participation in liturgical ministries is significantly reduced at this time given COVID-19 mitigation policies. Ministers of hospitality, two lectors, possibly one server, and--if deemed appropriate by the parish pastor--Eucharistic ministers as needed, are sufficient until restrictions are lifted.
- Provide translations of the readings if needed

When planning the parish-sponsored reception (presently suspended given COVID-19 precautions):

- Include all cultures in planning the reception with an awareness of their preference in food and drink

Suggested Rituals for your Confirmation Formation Program

(Recommendations and Guidelines)

Promulgated by Bishop Pates May 7, 2010

Revised August 6, 2011

Revised May 10, 2012

Revised August 25, 2014

Revised September 15, 2015

Revised April 15, 2016

Revised August 15, 2017

Revised November 1, 2017

Revised August 12, 2019

Revised September 14, 2020

To assist with the planning for the celebration of confirmation in parishes, we are updating the guidelines which were sent in the fall of 2008. This revised document includes sections on:

1. Suggestions for Increasing Youth Participation in Liturgies
2. Liturgical Items and Ministers
3. Liturgical Planning
4. **Confirmation Liturgy Response Form**

Scheduling Confirmation Liturgies: Bishop Joensen prefers that parishes choose the Easter season or the Fall months as more fitting times for confirmation and that parishes avoid celebrating confirmation during Lent. Please contact the Worship Office if you have questions or need more information.

For more information, look at a valuable resource for liturgy preparations— *Confirmation: A Parish Celebration*, a book written by Father Tim Fitzgerald of our diocese. The work is an in-depth look at the parish celebration of this sacrament of initiation—the planning, music, readings, homily, ministers, hospitality. Copies are available for purchase through the Worship Office at a discounted price of \$9.00.

Engaging the Teens in Early Liturgy Planning

Full Conscious, Active...Teenagers!

The goal of “full, conscious, and active participation” is central for Roman Catholics. Experience teaches us that the most vibrant participation comes from meeting the assembly where they are and from taking into account the specific characteristics of the group that has gathered. Celebrating liturgy with teenagers is no different. Using these suggestions below will help to increase and deepen liturgical participation and understanding within your faith formation groups. The efforts made at this critical time in young peoples’ lives last a lifetime. They enhance liturgical participation throughout our parishes—one confirmation class at a time.

1. **Plan early.** Select readings, ministers, music, etc., for the confirmation liturgy, several months before the actual Confirmation Mass.
2. **Involve youth in planning.** The confirmation liturgy should be planned, under direction by the program coordinator, catechists, music minister, the pastor and appropriate parish staff, by the youth themselves. The Diocese of Des Moines Regathering Guidelines Phases 1-3 should be respected until the pandemic limits are lifted. This offers a great opportunity for learning.
3. **Use familiar music. Note: under present COVID-19 mitigation policies, music should be limited to instrumental music and some sung selections, possibly including service music parts, led by one cantor. Musical preparations should follow those norms and practices presently in place at the parish for Sunday liturgies.** Select music that the parish and youth already know and can sing well. Even songs that are assumed to be familiar should be taught and repeatedly used with the youth throughout the year (see #4 below). Perhaps one new song would be appropriate at Confirmation, but it should be taught and repeated for months prior to the liturgy with the parish and the youth so that it is second nature. Because of the limited (under COVID-19 mitigation policies) number of guests and visitors, this liturgy is the time for a very familiar set of Eucharistic acclamations (e.g., Holy, Amen, Lamb of God, etc.) rather than a new setting.
4. **Use the music and liturgical texts throughout the time of preparation.** Provide an opportunity for all candidates, catechists, and parents to become familiar with the music over a period of time. Find different ways to include elements of the music and scriptures as a part of each gathering – large and small – of candidates and parents. Use the prayers of the liturgy—opening, gifts, Communion—at gatherings with parents and youth.
5. **Model good liturgical participation.** The way the entire assembly prays—parents, priests, deacons, and catechists included—makes a terrific difference in the lives of young people. Liturgical catechesis and experience is the primary form of catechesis in our lives of faith; it follows that liturgical participants are the best catechists.

Planning Considerations

After considering the elements on pages 26 through 31, please complete the response form on pages 32 & 33 and send it to Angie Hemmingsen at ahemmingsen@dmdiocese.org no fewer than 20 days prior to your parish's celebration of confirmation. Bishop Joensen's schedule is such that fewer than 20 days prior may not give him adequate time to receive your information.

1. **Hospitality:** See page 32 for considerations about the bishop's visit.

2. **Photographs:** Bishop Joensen is happy to be available for a group picture and individual pictures with the newly confirmed **after** the liturgy; face coverings/masks will ordinarily be worn except for a few moments of the actual pictures. These pictures should be taken with the bishop and the priests fully vested and in front of the altar in the Church. The time before the liturgy is best spent in prayer and reflection, especially with the sponsors. **No pictures shall be taken during the liturgy.**

3. **Liturgy resources and ministers:**

- a. Chrism and Vestments: The parish's Chrism, consecrated by the bishop at the Chrism Mass, is to be used. Several dishes or bowls are needed: a suitable dish/bowl of Chrism for the anointing; one dish/bowl for the cotton balls to be used to administer the anointing, and one dish/bowl for used cotton balls with Chrism that are to be burned at some point soon after the Mass. (These used cotton balls should be placed in a secure plastic bag; the parish pastor is responsible for oversight to ensure that they will appropriately be burned or buried at some point soon after Mass.)
- b. The parish's vestments are typically used; the bishop will bring his own alb. If the Confirmation Mass is not a normal Sunday weekend Mass or takes place during the week, red or white vestments may be worn; if it is a normal Sunday weekend Mass during Ordinary Time, green vestments are preferred.
- c. In general, the confirmand themselves should be allowed to focus on their role as recipients of the sacrament rather than to serve as liturgical ministers. During pandemic time, the gifts are not to be brought forward in procession.

4. **Music:**

- a. Generally, use the Sunday liturgy as the guide—musical settings and acclamations that would be suitable for the parish's Sunday liturgies.
- b. Additional musical needs for this liturgy might include:
 - sung acclamation during the sprinkling rite (presently suspended due to COVID-19 mitigation procedures)
 - instrumental music during the imposition of hands, if candidates process forward for this;
 - an acclamation, hymn, or song following the anointing of all candidates. This is done after the applause and is sung by the entire congregation.
- c. The communion hymn or song should be an appropriate "Body of Christ" hymn. Suggested musical selections are listed on page 31.
- d. See page 23 of these guidelines for suggestions to heighten participation in the liturgy by the confirmandi.
- e. The confirmandi should be intimately involved in planning all aspects of the liturgy.

5. **Nametags:** The candidates' nametags have confirmation names in large print.

6. **Appropriate Attire:** Dress should always be appropriate when we are in church. We are in the presence of God and in His house. Since the Rite of Confirmation is a Sacrament that occurs only once in a lifetime with the diocesan bishop as celebrant, a certain dress code should apply to all candidates, sponsors, and liturgical ministers (lectors, servers, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion). Candidates, sponsors, and ministers should wear proper semi-formal attire similar to clothing for other important life events. Please review what acceptable dress is for both male and female candidates and sponsors with your local parish confirmation coordinator. Below is a sample list of appropriate attire:

Females: A dress or suit is preferred. Dresses and skirts should extend to the knee. Tops, slacks or suits of any color are fine. Shoulders must be completely covered front and back. Tops must completely cover the stomach. Formal ethnic or cultural vesture is also appropriate.

Males: A suit, or blazer and slacks, with a dress shirt, tie, and dress shoes is preferred. Dress shirt hems should be tucked in, not hanging out. Ties, dress shirts, coats and slacks of any color are okay. Pants should come to the waist and over the hips. Formal ethnic or cultural vesture is also appropriate.

7. **One designated server:** If possible, have one (additional) server designated for crosier and miter.

8. **Master of Ceremonies (MC):** If possible, during this time of pandemic, the pastor, associate pastor, deacon, or someone from the parish may serve as MC—a senior server, the server coordinator, or another adult—who will help with this liturgy. This man or woman helps ensure the liturgy is well prepared and rehearsed and helps with arrangements during the liturgy itself. This person would provide a sense of dignity and presence, and would himself/herself be prepared for and knowledgeable about the liturgy.

Overview of the Liturgy

Introductory Rites

The celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation may take place on most days of the Liturgical Year. If the Mass takes place on Sunday or Saturday after 4 PM, Bishop Joensen ordinarily prefers using the Scripture readings of that Sunday unless prior consultation with him occurs. For the proper prayers, one may use the Mass texts from the Ritual Mass for Confirmation or for the proper Sunday. On certain solemn liturgical days of the Church Year, when the Sacrament of Confirmation is celebrated, there are some restrictions on the choice of texts. On those days, the Mass of the Day is used with its own readings, with the celebration of the Rite of Confirmation taking place after the proclamation of the Gospel.

Please ensure that your parish is using the 2016 ritual texts provided by the USCCB. See Appendix E for modified introductory rites

Entrance Procession

To emphasize the baptismal character of this liturgy, the lighted Easter candle can be carried in the entrance procession (except during Lent). Alternately it can be lighted in its place in the sanctuary or at the font.

The procession may proceed as follows:

- Cross bearer
- Acolytes with altar candles, if customary (presently suspended because of COVID-19 guidelines)
- Easter candle bearer
- Pastor and other priests concelebrating
- Deacon, lector or reader with book of the Gospels
- Bishop
- M.C. (if other than priest or deacon)

Call to Worship/Welcome of the Bishop

Before the entrance hymn or song, or after the entrance procession, a brief word of welcome is encouraged to be given by the pastor, the chair of the Pastoral Council, the catechetical leader, or another representative of the parish.

Entrance Hymn or Song

If during the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Easter, Lent, a hymn of the season. If in Ordinary Time, a hymn of baptism, of the Holy Spirit, or of the Church.

Penitential Act

On account of COVID-19 guidelines, no sprinkling rite is used at this time. When again permitted, see Appendix II in the Roman Missal. “Rite for the Blessing and Sprinkling for Water.” A sung acclamation accompanies the sprinkling. The sprinkling should not be done during the Gloria. See Appendix E for a modified introductory rite.

Gloria

The Third Edition of the Roman Missal specifies that the Gloria is now to be sung at each celebration of a *Ritual Mass*. If using the Mass for the Day when the Gloria is omitted (e.g. Mass for a Sunday of Advent or Lent), there is *no Gloria*, even though the Rite of Confirmation is celebrated.

Collect (Opening Prayer)

If celebrated on Sunday, solemnity, major feast day, or on weekdays of the Advent, Christmas or Easter seasons, the prayer of the day is used. If celebrated on a weekday in Ordinary Time, the prayers for the Ritual Mass “For the Conferral of Confirmation” are used.

Liturgy of the Word

In accord with the General Instruction of the Roman Missal and the General Norms for the Liturgical Year and Calendar, the readings and texts for Mass are selected based on when the liturgy will be celebrated. If confirmation is celebrated on:

Sunday of Advent, Lent, Christmas & Easter seasons: use the Lectionary’s readings and Mass texts for the day

Holy Day of Obligation: use the Lectionary’s readings for the day & Mass texts for the Holy Day

Easter Weekdays:

- a.) **If during the Octave of Easter (Monday-Saturday):** use the Lectionary’s readings and Mass texts for the day
- b.) **Any other Easter Weekday:** start with the Lectionary’s readings but substitute one or more readings suggested for Confirmation. Mass texts are from the Ritual Mass for Confirmation

Solemnities of the Lord (e.g. Ascension), Our Lady (e.g. Assumption), or the Saints (e.g. Saints Peter & Paul, All Saints’): use the Lectionary’s readings and Mass texts for the day

Sundays of Ordinary Time:

- a.) **If celebrated at a parish celebration of Sunday Mass:** use the Lectionary readings and Mass texts for the day with the option of substituting the Second Reading with a New Testament reading from Confirmation
- b.) **If celebrated outside of the parish celebration of Sunday Mass (e.g. an afternoon liturgy, specific for Confirmation):** again, ordinarily Bishop Joensen prefers using the Lectionary readings for the day; readings and Mass texts may come from the *Ritual Mass for Confirmation* with permission from the Bishop (please contact Angie Hemmingsen, executive assistant to the Bishop, to obtain his permission).

Feasts of the Lord (e.g. Exultation of the Holy Cross), Our Lady (e.g. Visitation), or the Saints (e.g. St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Mary Magdalene, etc.): For Feasts of Our Lord and of the Blessed Mother, the readings and prayers for the feast should be used; for saints and other memorials, readings and Mass texts from *Ritual Mass for Confirmation* are permitted after obtaining permission of the Bishop.

December 17-24: readings and Mass texts from the *Ritual Mass for Confirmation* are permitted after obtaining permission from the bishop; readings for Confirmation may be substituted if a compelling pastoral reason exists and permission from bishop is received.

All other weekdays in the Liturgical Year: readings and Mass texts from the *Ritual Mass for Confirmation* are permitted

The Mass texts for the *Ritual Mass for Confirmation* are found in Chapter V of *The Order of Confirmation / Ritual para La Confirmación*. See the Lectionary, Volume IV – *Christian Initiation-Confirmation*, #764-768, for suggested readings. Please contact Office of Worship, if you have questions about any particular readings or Mass texts.

Rite of Confirmation

The rite includes five elements and concludes with the General Intercessions.

Presentation of the Candidates to the Bishop

- When there are about 40 or fewer candidates to be confirmed, the candidates may be presented individually or as a group. If presented individually, each candidate stands as his/her name is called.
- When there are more than about 40 candidates to be confirmed, the candidates are presented as a group and all stand at the same time. Candidates' names are called individually.

Homily

The candidates are seated for the homily.

Renewal of Baptismal Promises

The candidates stand as the bishop leads them in this renewal of baptismal promises (five questions). Candidates respond: “**I do.**” They should be prepared to do so and practiced, as a group, with conviction and strong volume. At the end of the questions, the bishop says, “This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church”. We are proud to profess it in Christ Jesus our Lord,” to which the whole congregation replies, “Amen.” This may be sung.

Laying On of Hands

The concelebrating priests stand near the bishop. He says an invitation to prayer, which is followed by a brief period of silent prayer.

- Given our COVID-19 limitations, the bishop will not impose hands directly upon individual candidates, but will associate with any priests present to extend hands over the entire group to invoke the Holy Spirit. Candidates will either stand at their place in the pews or assemble at the front of the body of the church, maintaining social distancing.
- Then the formal prayer of Confirmation follows, prayed by the bishop.

Anointing with Chrism

- Though the rite allows an appropriate song to be sung, it is preferred to have this done in silence in order to hear the words of the sacrament. If a song is sung it should not begin until after a few have been confirmed. The deacon or priest brings the Chrism and bowls with cotton balls and for used cotton balls to the bishop. Each candidate, accompanied by sponsor,

processes to the bishop for the anointing, or the bishop may go to the individual candidates located in their pews or at a socially distanced location near the sanctuary.

- The sponsor places his or her right hand on the candidate's shoulder during the anointing. Either the sponsor or the candidate gives the candidate's name to the bishop. This can be written in large letters on their nametag and attached to the candidate's chest.
- The bishop calls the candidate by the name on the name tag: "N., be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit," and the candidate responds, "**Amen.**"
- The bishop then says, "Peace be with you," and the candidate responds "**And with your spirit.**"

Immediately after the anointing is a good time for a musical acclamation, hymn, or song that connects with some aspect of the mystery of the sacrament of confirmation. Such an acclamation with vigor and spirit is encouraged.

Following anointing, the bishop will use hand sanitizer and a purificator to cleanse his hand. Given the use of cotton balls during the time of pandemic, it is not necessary to prepare a bowl of soapy water and towel for washing his hands. (Reminder: The used cotton balls should be placed in a secure plastic bag; the parish pastor is responsible for oversight to ensure that they will appropriately be burned or buried at some point soon after Mass.)

Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful)

These are sung by the cantor or deacon, or are announced by the deacon or by one lay reader.

Liturgy of the Eucharist

Preparation of the Gifts and Altar

The liturgy continues in the usual way. The presentation of the gifts might involve some of the newly confirmed persons.

Eucharistic Prayer and Acclamations

Use settings that the confirmation candidates and parish already know and sing well. When Eucharistic Prayer I, II, II is used, the proper texts are inserted. See the Ritual Mass, "For the Conferral of Confirmation" in the Missal.

Communion Rite

Given our pandemic precautions, communion under both forms for all who will receive is suspended for this liturgy of Christian Initiation. Only the Sacred Host will be distributed. Nonetheless, good catechesis regarding the full sacramental presence of Christ in both species (Host, Precious Blood) should be conveyed during the formation process, anticipating the time when pandemic limitations are lifted.

The communion hymn begins as the bishop and concelebrating priests begin to receive communion. The hymn(s) and other music continue until all have received communion.

Concluding Rites

Announcements

The bishop and/or pastor or other parish representative may give brief announcements, if applicable. At this time, no parish-sponsored reception should take place until pandemic regathering guidelines are modified or lifted.

Special Blessing

If you would like the bishop to give a special blessing over the newly confirmed and the whole assembly, consider using Solemn Blessing #9 or #11 from the Roman Missal, or from the prayers over the people, #19, #22, or #23. Be sure to indicate this on your response form and have the text available during the liturgy.

Final Blessing

Dismissal

Recessional Song or Hymn

Bishop's Office Response Form

DIOCESE OF DES MOINES CONFIRMATION LITURGY PREPARATION

Please email completed form *at least 20 days prior* to the scheduled liturgy to Angie Hemmingsen
ahemmingsen@dmdiocese.org -- 601 Grand Ave., Des Moines, IA 50309

PRELIMINARY INFORMATION

Parish(es)/Location _____

of Confirmandi _____

Date of Liturgy _____ Time _____

Language: English _____ Spanish _____ Bilingual _____

Coordinator's Name _____

Coordinator's Contact: *Office Phone* _____ *Cell Phone** _____

**In case of emergency*

SCHEDULING

Bishop Joensen ordinarily expects to meet with all the confirmandi one hour before the Confirmation Mass. This meeting will take place in _____ at this time: _____

Our parish would like Bishop to:

stay for a dinner or reception | Location _____

Photographs:

The bishop will be available for group and individual photographs immediately following the liturgy to be taken in church before the altar. Participants will wear and then take off masks briefly for the photos. Bishop will not be available for pictures prior to the liturgy.

No photographs to be taken during the liturgy.

CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE...

LITURGICAL ELEMENTS

Liturgy of the Word

Readings to be used: Sunday/Feast/Daily Mass readings _____

Readings from Confirmation Mass options **

** *If the Sunday/Feast/Daily Mass readings are not being used, please indicate below and submit a copy of the texts of the readings with this planning sheet.*

Reading 1 _____

Reading 2 _____

Gospel Reading _____

Please check all that apply:

Candidates will join the entrance procession.

We will present candidates: individually (about 40 or fewer) as a group

We will include a short acclamation following the Rite of Confirmation.

We would like to include a special closing blessing,

found on *Roman Missal* page: _____

Heartfelt thanks for your efforts preparing everyone for the Confirmation liturgy!

(Page 2)

What's next? – The Time After Confirmation

The Church reminds us that there is a final period of post-sacramental catechesis or mystagogy. This is a time for the newly confirmed to “grow in deepening their grasp of the paschal mystery and in making it part of their lives through meditation on the Gospel, sharing in the Eucharist, and doing the works of charity” (RCIA #244).

Mystagogy is a time during which the participants communally reflect on the graces they have received to date, receive assistance to transition into the “general population” of the church, and discern ways by which they will live out their new faith commitments.

This Post-Confirmation time will be a critical period as they will soon be in the 18+ age group when more than half of young Catholics become inactive. It is essential to help them find ways to become immersed in the life of the Church. We may assist the confirmandi in:

1. “deepening their grasp of the paschal mystery” by encouraging them to
 - a. participating in the Sacrament of Penance (Confession) on a regular basis
 - b. participate more fully in the sacred Liturgy, especially the Triduum
 - c. become members of a small faith sharing group that focuses on the
 - d. Sunday lectionary readings and how to apply them to our daily lives
 - e. frequently participate in Lenten Stations of the Cross
 - f. practice personal prayer fervently and faithfully

2. “meditating on the Gospel” by encouraging them to
 - a. join a Bible Study Group
 - b. regularly pray lectio divina alone or in a group
 - c. reflect on the Sunday readings (<http://www.usccb.org/nab/>)

3. “sharing in the Eucharist” by encouraging them to
 - a. attend Mass regularly on Sundays, holy days and other occasions
 - b. serve as liturgical ministries, such as lector, usher, or music ministry
 - c. attend holy hours, adoration and benediction

4. “doing the works of charity” by encouraging them to
 - a. stay involved in service opportunities in the parish, school or community
 - b. serve on the Parish Retreat Team or Diocesan Youth Council
 - c. serve as a catechist in the parish religious education program
 - d. continue learning about the lives of the Saints (www.americancatholic.org)
 - e. stay active in their parish Youth Ministry Program

Every year on the 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time the United States Catholic Church celebrates World Youth Day. Pope John Paul II began this tradition in 1985 and subsequent popes continue the tradition. This Sunday is a good time to recognize all of the teens of the parish and recognize all of the service they provide throughout the year.

(<http://www.vatican.va/gmg/documents/index.html> and <https://www.usccb.org/topics/world-youth-day>)

Reflecting On & Evaluating Your Confirmation Formation Program

Whether your Confirmation Formation program is new or has been in place for many years, it is a good practice to evaluate your program from time to time. In addition to evaluating your program at the end of the year, it may be helpful to evaluate certain events, such as parent/candidate sessions, retreats, interviews, etc., soon after they take place. Below are some questions you might want to consider when evaluating your program.

Overall Program

- Were the following topics adequately reviewed during the formation program?
 - The purpose and effects of the Sacrament
 - The gifts of the Holy Spirit
 - The significance of choosing a Confirmation name
- Were the teens exposed to different forms of prayer?
- Did the program emphasize the faith formation of the teens and not simply the memorization of text?
- Do the teens understand the Rite of Confirmation including the signs and symbols?
 - Was there adequate time to prepare the teens?
- Were their lessons on the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Penance?
- Were candidates able to plan the celebration?

Meetings, Gatherings, and Activities

- Were all of the meetings/events publicized well in advance?
- Was overall attendance a problem?
 - With teens?
 - With parents?
 - With sponsors? (if applicable)
 - Why?
- Were there enough options for families/sponsors and teens to participate in the program?
- Were the interviews helpful to the teens and to the interviewers? Did the teens feel welcomed, respected and affirmed?
- Was your schedule convenient for the majority of the teens and their parents?
- Do you need to offer other options or formats such as weekends or perhaps another evening during the week?

Retreats/Spiritual Experiences

- Were there enough options for retreats/spiritual experiences available?
- Were the goals of each retreat/spiritual experience met?
- Was the number of retreats/spiritual experiences adequate? Were there too many?
- Was there catechesis and experiences for the Sacrament of Penance?

When thinking about the retreats/spiritual experiences...

- Were the leaders prepared?
- Was there enough spirituality, prayer time, and quiet reflection time?

- Was there enough of a balance between small groups, large group talks, quiet time, games, skits, etc.?
- Were there enough volunteers?

Service/Apprenticeship

- Did the service component focus on quality rather than quantity?
- Do the teens now have a servant mentality?
- Were teens' service experiences undertaken with a larger group (possibly with other teens, family members, or parishioners) or was the service undertaken alone? Were there enough opportunities to experience both types of service?
- Were the families of the teens involved in the service experience?
- Was there a good balance between parish and community service?
- Were the teens prepared before the service and was there reflection after their service experience?
- Was there an opportunity for the teens to process and share their service experience?

Planning & Executing the Liturgy (especially critical is the involvement of the participants in planning)

- Developing an Evaluation Form

The purpose of reflecting on and evaluating your program is to use the feedback to improve your Confirmation Formation Program.

You can develop a short one-page evaluation sheet to give to your Confirmation Formation staff/volunteers and/ or to the teens and their parents to get their feedback.

Three sample evaluation forms – one for your staff, one for the teens and one for parents – are provided in Appendix B.

Another option is to use is an on-line evaluation service such as Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com). The basic service on Survey Monkey is free while the set up and design of the survey is quite easy yet very flexible.

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