



Diocese of Des Moines

Confirmation Pastors and Clergy Guide

Purpose of This Guide

This guide equips pastors and clergy of the Diocese of Des Moines to shepherd confirmandi, support families, and collaborate with parish formation leaders, catechists, and sponsors throughout the eleven-month Confirmation journey. It provides theological grounding, pastoral expectations, and structural clarity to ensure a unified and mission-centered sacramental preparation process.

Diocese of Des Moines Confirmation Standards:

- Family registered in a parish, or in residence, within the Diocese of Des Moines.
- Baptized Catholic Christian or already received into the Catholic Church. Baptized Protestant Christians go through an adapted Becoming Catholic process for children.
- Enrollment in a parish Faith Formation Program, Catholic School, or Home School.
- Enrollment and participation in the parish Sacrament of Confirmation Program Instructional Formation Sessions with a standard of nine formation sessions within eleven months. (The eleven-month process anticipates a parent/confirmandi meeting at the beginning of the process and ends with Confirmation.)
- Selection of a Saint for the Confirmation preparation process and liturgy.
- Selection of a Sponsor for the Confirmation preparation and beyond.
- Completion of At Home Conversations for the Confirmation Program.
- Completion of Sponsor Chats.
- Attending a Retreat that is substantive and appropriate in duration during the Confirmation Program Year.

The Role of Pastors and Catholic Clergy:

Pastors and clergy play a vital pastoral role in Confirmation preparation. Their responsibilities include:

- providing spiritual leadership through preaching, teaching, and sacramental ministry.
- supporting and collaborating with parish catechetical leaders involved in the implementation of the Confirmation process.
- supporting confirmandi and families with encouragement, presence, and prayer.
- guiding parish formation leaders and catechists to ensure fidelity to Diocesan standards.
- helping sponsors understand their role and ensuring that sponsors meet the canonical requirements for serving in this ministry.
- helping ensure that candidates are suitably instructed, properly disposed, and prepared to renew their baptismal promises.
- fostering belonging within the parish so families experience the Church as a spiritual home.
- reviewing and discerning Confirmation requests in anticipation of the Diocesan policy of 6th grade

Sacrament of Confirmation Defined by the Catechism of the Catholic Church

THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

CCC1285: 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 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.”

Spiritual Strengthening: It provides a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit, like that given to the Apostles at Pentecost, to empower the faithful to spread and defend the faith by word and deed.

Indelible Mark: Like Baptism, it imprints a permanent spiritual character on the soul. It can only be received once, empowering the confirmed person to officially profess their faith publicly.

Confirmation Overview

Confirmation completes baptismal grace, strengthening young people through the Holy Spirit for deeper participation in the life and mission of the Church. Parents nurture their child’s faith from infancy, and clergy partner with them to strengthen belonging, affirm identity, foster encounters with Christ, and inspire missionary discipleship throughout their faith journey.

A Message from Bishop William Joensen

“Confirmation is a sacrament that's meant to strengthen baptismal grace and anchor a young person's identity in Christ. By celebrating the sacrament in sixth grade, we continue to build a solid faith foundation upon which our young people will sow God's spirit as they enter adolescence. It is our firm belief and hope that they will be emboldened with the gifts of wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, courage, and a devoted love for Jesus and his father, along with all God's saints. We infer that earlier confirmation better serves families and equips young people to see themselves as on mission to live as Jesus did and to share his love with others.”

Diocese of Des Moines Confirmation Monthly Program Structure Overview

The Confirmation journey follows eleven monthly movements:

1. **Parent/Confirmandi Meeting:** Orientation, expectations, baptismal identity.
 - We focus on Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) 1267 and 1 Corinthians 12:12-14
2. **Identity:** Rediscovering one’s identity as a beloved child of God.
 - We focus on CCC 1691 & 1700 and Isaiah 43:1 along with John 1:35-51
3. **Belonging:** Living belonging through service and Works of Mercy.
 - We focus on CCC 2447 and Matthew 25:35-40
4. **Encounter with Jesus:** Recognizing Christ in Scripture, Eucharist, and daily life.
 - We focus on CCC 426 and Luke 24:13-35
5. **Encounter with Scripture:** Learning to pray with Scripture.
 - We focus on CCC 683 and Acts 2:1-13
6. **Encounter with the Holy Spirit:** Understanding gifts and fruits of the Spirit.
 - We focus on CCC 1830-1832 and Galatians 5:22-23

7. **Retreat:** Deep personal encounter with Jesus through prayer and reflection.
 - We focus on CCC 1309 and Mark 9:2-8a
8. **Called to Mission:** Making Works of Mercy part of daily life.
 - We focus on CCC 1303 and Matthew 28:19-20
9. **Life in the Spirit:** Living as missionary disciples.
 - We focus on CCC 2472 and James 1:22
10. **Disciples at Home and Parish:** Practicing discipleship in daily life.
 - We focus on CCC 1285 and John 20:22-23
11. **Confirmation:** Completing initiation through the sacrament.
 - We focus on CCC 1316 and Acts 1:8

Statement of Understanding of Roles

Confirmandi Responsibilities

- Engage in parish life.
- Attend parish formation sessions.
- Complete monthly at-home formation.
- Engage in Scripture, prayer, and service.
- Select a Saint
- Participate in Sponsor Chats.
- Attend a retreat.

Parent Responsibilities

- Attend monthly formation.
- Lead at-home conversations.
- Document family service.
- Model prayer and discipleship.
- Engage in parish life.

Sponsor Responsibilities

- Complete the Diocesan Sponsor in Good Standing Form
- Complete Sponsor Chats.
- Attend the Confirmation Mass.
- Support ongoing discipleship.

Reception of Confirmation in Anticipation of Diocese of Des Moines Policy

It is a pastoral judgment by pastors to determine whether those elements required by the revised *Code of Canon Law* are indeed present, namely that the person be baptized, have the use of reason, be suitably instructed, and be properly disposed and able to renew the baptismal promises (cf. Canon 843, §1, 889, §2). When a member of the faithful wishes to receive this Sacrament, even though not satisfying one or more elements of the local norms, those elements must give way to the fundamental right of the faithful to receive the Sacraments.

In the Diocese of Des Moines, if one should present oneself to receive Confirmation before 6th grade, we support a pastor process with three simple components.

1. A short, content-based readiness interview

Pastor + parent + child 10–15 minutes Based on the curriculum's core goals:

- “Tell me about your Baptism.”
- “Who is Jesus to you?”
- “What does the Holy Spirit do?”
- “Why do you want to be confirmed?”

2. A one-page diocesan readiness checklist (a pastoral tool for documenting that the child understands the essentials):

- Identity as a child of God
- Belonging to the Church
- Jesus' call
- Basic understanding of the Holy Spirit
- Desire for the sacrament

3. A “Pastor's Determination Form”

Three checkboxes:

☐ The child is suitably instructed and ready. Please forward a scanned version of this form to the Vicar of Divine Worship at tchicoine@dmdiocese.org for approval of faculties granted to me (pastor).

☐ The child is suitably instructed and ready. Please forward a scanned version of this form to the Vicar of Divine Worship at tchicoine@dmdiocese.org for approval and confirmand will be included in the next parish Confirmation by the Bishop.

☐ More time is needed; pastor recommends waiting.

Sample Diocesan Checklist Form

Sacramental Preparation Pastoral Assessment

Child's Name: _____

Parish: _____

Pastor/Interviewer: _____

Date: _____

Purpose

This checklist serves as a pastoral tool to help determine that the child demonstrates an age-appropriate understanding of the essential elements of Christian faith and expresses a desire to receive the sacrament.

Readiness Indicators

For each area, mark the level of understanding observed.

Essential Understanding	Demonstrates Understanding	Developing Understanding	Needs Further Formation
1. Identity as a Child of God	☐	☐	☐
2. Belonging to the Church	☐	☐	☐
3. Jesus' Call Can describe,	☐	☐	☐
4. Basic Understanding of the Holy Spirit	☐	☐	☐
5. Desire for the Sacrament	☐	☐	☐

Pastoral Conversation

Recommendation

- ☐ The child is suitably instructed and ready. Please forward a scanned version of this form to the Vicar of Divine Worship at tchicoine@dmdiocese.org for approval of faculties granted to me (pastor).
- ☐ The child is suitably instructed and ready. Please forward a scanned version of this form to the Vicar of Divine Worship at tchicoine@dmdiocese.org for approval and confirmand will be included in the next parish Confirmation by the Bishop.
- ☐ More time is needed; pastor recommends waiting.

Pastor/Interviewer Signature: _____

Date: _____

(This checklist is intended as a pastoral aid and should be used with sensitivity to the child's age, developmental level, and faith experience.)

DRAFT

Letter of Good Standing for the Catholic Sponsor

Diocesan Sponsor in Good Standing Form

Diocese of Des Moines

Confirmation Sponsor

We would like your recommendation of this potential sponsor:

Please complete this form by checking any and all of the following phrases that apply to the person being considered as sponsor:

- € is a registered member of my parish
- € attends Mass each Sunday
- € is a confirmed and practicing Catholic in good standing with the Catholic Church
- € is at least 16 years old
- € (if married) is in a marriage recognized by the Catholic Church

Statement of the Sponsor:

I recognize that in accepting the role of sacramental sponsorship I become responsible to be a model and example to my Confirmation recipient as a committed and active Catholic and to be a support to his/her life-long spiritual growth. I am committed to my Catholic faith, that I, myself have received all three sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist), and I am not living in a situation which keeps me from properly receiving the sacraments. I try to lead a life in harmony with the faith and the role I am undertaking, by witnessing to the values of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and by seeking to be of service to others for love of Him.

Sponsor's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Sponsor's Pastor: _____ Date: _____

Parish City/Town: _____