



The Call to Missionary  
Discipleship:  
Confirmation Guidelines for  
the Diocese of Evansville





## Catholic Diocese of Evansville

Office of the Bishop

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Dear Pastors, Parish Catechetical Leaders, and Youth Ministers,

The sacramental life of the Church celebrates the graces God abundantly bestows on His people throughout our lives. As we recognize the power of this grace, we are called to prepare intentionally and prayerfully as a community and individually to dispose ourselves to receive these gifts of Divine life.

The Guidelines for Confirmation are meant to provide those who prepare young people for this sacrament with clear expectations for the spiritual, catechetical and personal formation of the candidates. Emphasis in this formation is on a personal encounter with Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit that leads to missionary discipleship, the richness of the teachings and heritage of the Catholic Church, and the call to service. The intention of a Confirmation program is to prepare young people not only for the ritual celebration of the sacrament but also for a lifelong commitment to using the Gifts of the Holy Spirit and their own talents in the service of the Lord Jesus and their brothers and sisters as missionary disciples.

Please take time to read the Guidelines carefully. They are an essential framework that will help each parish establish a Confirmation formation program suited to the needs to their young people. I want to offer my thanks to the team who worked hard and long in formulating the Guidelines. I am also grateful to all who work with our young people in helping them prepare for this sacrament. You are helping form the generation that will be the leaders in our parishes in the years to come. Of course, we do all this in partnership with the Holy Spirit, relying on the gifts of the Spirit bestowed on us at our own Baptism and Confirmation.

We entrust our efforts to the intercession of Mary, Mother of God. May the Lord continue to bless you and your ministry of catechesis in your parishes.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Joseph M. Siegel, DD, STL  
Bishop of Evansville

*Be living members of this Church, therefore, and, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, seek to serve all people like Christ, who came not to be served but to serve. (The Order of Confirmation, p. 21)*

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## THE VISION FOR CONFIRMATION PREPARATION

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“All ministry with adolescents must be directed toward presenting young people with the Good News of Jesus Christ and inviting and challenging them to become His disciples. We need to provide concrete ways by which the demands, excitement, and adventure of being a disciple of Jesus Christ can be personally experienced by adolescents—where they tax and test their resources and where they stretch their present capacities and skills to the limits. Young people need to have a true opportunity for exploring what discipleship ultimately involves.”

(Renewing the Vision. Part 2)

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## INTRODUCTION

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The sacramental life of the Church ritualizes and celebrates the experience of God present in our lives. All faith formation and sacramental celebration should immerse the community into the life of God and is intended to foster encounter with Jesus Christ. Confirmation celebrates the sustaining presence of the Holy Spirit bestowed at Baptism with an outpouring of the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit. Because of this, we are called to proclaim Jesus Christ as missionary disciples.

Pope Francis states in *The Joy of the Gospel (Evangelii Gaudium)* that by virtue of our Baptism, all are called to be missionary disciples. He emphasizes that there is no need for lengthy training to be an evangelizer, stating, “Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are “disciples” and “missionaries”, but rather that we are always “missionary disciples.” (120)

It is this call to missionary discipleship that is to be emphasized in the preparation of young people for Confirmation in the Diocese of Evansville. “Confirmation perfects Baptismal grace; it is the sacrament which gives the Holy Spirit in order to root us more deeply in the divine filiation, incorporate us more firmly into Christ, strengthen our bond with the Church, associate us more closely with her mission, and help us bear witness to the Christian faith in words accompanied by deeds.”<sup>1</sup> Confirmation is about becoming a fully initiated Catholic, empowered to live a holy life, in the service of the Gospel and God’s people. As persons on the journey of

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<sup>1</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1316

faith, Confirmation is not the end of faith formation, but rather the beginning of *living the Christian life fully*.

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## General Principles for Guiding Parishes in Developing Confirmation Programs

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- Each diocese has its own guidelines or policy for preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation. The preparation for Confirmation in the Diocese of Evansville includes some type of general religious education at the high school level either at the parish, Catholic School or at home with an additional period of preparation providing appropriate and adequate formation on the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- The primary focus of Confirmation preparation is always to foster a disposition to a personal encounter with Jesus Christ.
- The preparation period includes parent or legal guardian and sponsor involvement, a retreat experience and some form of service.
- Candidates are asked to write a letter to the Bishop, explaining why they want to be confirmed.
- Missionary discipleship is the primary focus of Confirmation. Preparation for Confirmation relies on basic faith formation and intentionally builds on this focus of teaching for discipleship.
- Parish programs should prepare young people to know and embrace their Catholic identity and what it means to live life as a missionary disciple.
- The parish is encouraged to accompany young people and their parents or legal guardians and sponsors on their spiritual journey—marking a clear path uniting Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.
- Inclusion of persons with disabilities in the Sacrament of Confirmation is expected. Every effort must be made to include persons with disabilities in the preparation and celebration of the sacrament. “At times, pastoral need may necessitate an

accommodated setting and a simpler manner.” (Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities, 18)

- Safe environment requirements shall be followed by all who are in contact with the Confirmation candidates, vulnerable persons and minors as directed by diocesan policy.
- Parish Confirmation Coordinators appreciate the vital role the entire Church assembly plays in effective evangelization of their candidates. They should take as their cue the Baptismal Catechumenate for creating a Confirmation preparation journey which—through relationships, ritual and worship—involves parents, sponsors and the entire parish community in modeling and nurturing the faith for the young people of their parish.
- The Diocese of Evansville values the faith commitment of our paid and volunteer ministers. Parishes should provide volunteer ministers with the formation, resources and support they need to guide and prepare young people, their parents and sponsors to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- The Offices of Catechesis, Youth and Young Adult Ministry, Worship and Canonical Services are also available for consultation and support.
- According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: “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.”<sup>2</sup>

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## SPECIFIC GUIDELINES FOR THE FORMATION AND PREPARATION OF CANDIDATES

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### THE FOUNDATION OF CONFIRMATION

We help young people understand the way Christians grow spiritually is to be rooted in Jesus Christ—that is by following Jesus and living His message. This means that we form young people to be missionary disciples of Jesus around four key spiritual principles or components:

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<sup>2</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1309

1. Growth in knowledge of Jesus Christ and the apostolic faith
2. Being at prayer and worship, both public and private
3. Belonging to a community of believers
4. Building God's reign on earth through service

In other words, these guidelines of the Diocese of Evansville ask that each parish design its own confirmation formation program in such a way that it meets the needs of the young people, their parents, sponsors and the entire faith community while also intentionally incorporating these four key spiritual principles in some way.

The following model visualizes these four principles and guides planning for the overall sessions as well as individual sessions.





## THE CONTENT OF CONFIRMATION PREPARATION

Parishes should develop their formation programs so that the candidates have, *at minimum*, six sessions. This could include at *least one* session in which the candidates and their sponsors can gather together and be led in activities that ask them to reflect on faith experiences. This session is to be facilitated by the Confirmation Coordinator or some other qualified catechist. It is also expected that the sponsor will participate with the candidate as much as possible.

Suggested topics for inclusion in the content of the formation programs are:

- An encounter with Jesus and his teachings
- The significance and essential connection between Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist
- The Person and work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian and the Church, with a particular emphasis on the gifts and fruits of the Spirit.
- The meaning of “missionary discipleship” grounded in an understanding of church especially reflected in the lives of the saints and the four spiritual components of “making disciples”:
  - Come and See- Encounter
  - Follow Me- Accompany
  - Remain in Me- Community
  - Go Therefore and Make Disciples of All Nations- Send
- The centrality of personal prayer along with opportunities to experience different prayer forms.
- Liturgical catechesis on the meaning, actions, words, gestures and symbols used during the Rite of Confirmation.

Confirmation formation should not be all encompassing but focus only on content which allows the candidates to be adequately formed to receive the sacrament of Confirmation fruitfully. In other words, preparation for Confirmation is not a time to present the full breadth of the Catholic faith after which one “graduates.” Nor is it something to be earned after completing a series of requirements. While we do invite candidates to deepen their knowledge and their commitment to service, the intention is a fuller opening of the heart and soul to the reception of the sacramental graces bestowed in abundance by the Holy Spirit. We must avoid turning preparation into any kind of hoop jumping exercise.

## SERVICE

Service opportunities that are included in the parish’s Confirmation Formation Program need to be planned and taught in such a way as to affirm the corporal and spiritual works of mercy and engage young people in serving others—most especially direct service to, and advocacy for, the

poor and marginalized in their own community. A process whereby a candidate is given an opportunity to reflect on his or her service is to be developed if such opportunities are included as part of the Confirmation Formation Program. Specific hours of service are not required. Service should be meaningful and processed in relationship to Jesus' teachings as found in Scripture. As a Church we are called to serve not to be served.

## CONFIRMATION RETREAT

Retreats offer candidates time away to reflect on their faith experience and to deepen their relationship with Jesus and each other. Parishes are to provide at least one retreat opportunity specific to Confirmation as part of immediate preparation for the sacrament. Alternatively, parishes may offer their candidates the option of participating in a regional or diocesan retreat experience designed specifically for Confirmation. Lack of a candidate's participation in a specific retreat experience is not a reason for denial of the sacrament.

## THE PARISH COMMUNITY

The Catechumenate model understands the heart of the Confirmation journey as being located within the life of the full faith community. Catechesis for Confirmation should strive to awaken a sense of belonging to the Catholic Church, the universal Church as well as the parish community. The latter bears special responsibility for the preparation of confirmands. (CCC. 1309)

A loving faith community is to be:

- Inviting—intentionally seeking-out and personally inviting all Catholic young people and their parents to begin preparing for Confirmation.
- Welcoming and evangelizing—providing community support and involvement through rituals and activities where candidates, their parents and sponsors can experience the welcome and support of all its members.
- Informed and engaged—maintaining awareness of the candidates' preparation journey through pulpit announcements, notes in the parish bulletin, essay displays in the gathering space, and requests for prayer and participation in parish activities.
- Supportive—creating opportunities for candidates to socialize and grow in relationship with each other while gaining a sense of belonging to the larger Church through worship, prayer, study and service.



## SPONSOR

Young people are to be guided in their selection of a sponsor by the parish Confirmation Coordinator and their parents or legal guardian. Early in the preparation process, each proposed sponsor is to be given a clear description of the qualifications required by Church law (canon 874) and verified by the pastor, administrator, or his designee. To be permitted to take on the function of sponsor a person must:

- be designated by the one to be confirmed, by the parents or the person who takes their place, or in their absence by the pastor or minister and have the aptitude and intention of fulfilling this function;
- be 16 years old; the pastor or minister may grant an exception for a younger age for a just cause;
- be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist and who leads a life of faith in keeping with the function to be taken on;
- not be bound by any canonical penalty;
- not be the father or mother of the one to be confirmed.<sup>3</sup>

A sponsor is to present a certificate of Baptism which has been issued within the last six months to his or her pastor or administrator; this assists in the verification that the sponsor is a fully-initiated Catholic, and if married, that one's marriage is recognized by the Church.

- Candidates are encouraged to select one of their baptismal sponsors (godparents) if they meet requirements and expectations (canon 893 §2).<sup>4</sup>
- A sponsor is to participate in the preparation process and be willing to serve as a guide, confidante, and listener.
- Parishes are to provide formation for sponsors to help them appreciate the permanent nature of their role.

Ideally, a well-planned parish Confirmation process will include:

- A sponsor orientation session.
- Gatherings and formation sessions specifically for sponsors.
- Sponsor participation in candidate rituals and liturgical experiences.
- Sponsor participation in the rehearsal and liturgy celebrating the Rite of Confirmation.

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<sup>3</sup> *Code of Canon Law*, canon 874.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, canon 893 §2.

These expectations presume the local residency of the sponsor and a positive and comfortable relationship with the candidate. In special circumstances where a candidate's intended sponsor cannot be present at the time of Confirmation, a proxy may be selected by the candidate, parents, the one who takes their place, or even the pastor or minister; however, it is not required that a candidate has a sponsor. A proxy is not the sponsor but represents the sponsor at the Rite of Confirmation.

## PARENTS or LEGAL GUARDIANS

At Confirmation, parents or legal guardians are invited to support their children by participating in preparation experiences. Therefore, a parish Confirmation preparation journey is to include *opportunities for parents or legal guardians to gather as a group*, as well as with their candidate to:

- understand their role as models in the faith development of their son or daughter;
- deepen their own faith lives; and
- strengthen their family relationships so all may grow in relationship with God.

## PASTORS and ADMINISTRATORS

Pastors and administrators are responsible for ensuring the goals of the diocesan catechetical mission are achieved by ensuring that Confirmation preparation promotes the following:

- The Baptismal Catechumenate inspires all parish catechesis.
- Catechesis emphasizes age-appropriate opportunities for adults, youth and children and includes a comprehensive plan for youth ministry and for the formation of catechetical leaders.
- A suitable catechesis is imparted for the celebration of the sacraments.

Pastors and administrators are to play a visible and active role in inviting, welcoming and supporting candidates, parents, sponsors and the parish faith community in the Confirmation process as all reflect on what it means to be a fully-initiated Catholic.

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## DIOCESAN EXPECTATIONS FOR CANDIDATES

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It is expected that young people, baptized into the Catholic faith as infants and already welcome at the Eucharistic table, will take seriously their call to complete their initiation and begin preparing for Confirmation at the invitation of their parish community.

A young person seeking to begin immediate preparation for Confirmation will be able to demonstrate a basic understanding of the Catholic faith and have participated in a systematic parish faith formation program and/or attended Catholic School. If such understanding and knowledge is not apparent, the young person is invited to begin a period of formation *before* formation for the celebration of Confirmation. There must be adequate formation preliminary to Confirmation preparation for the candidate to enter into the process fully.

Preparation for Confirmation is to take place at the parish where the young person presently worships. Catholic high schools *do not* offer preparation programs for Confirmation but are to actively direct eligible young people to seek Confirmation in their parish.

At a minimum, young people presenting themselves for Confirmation are expected to:

1. Have participated prayerfully, faithfully, and responsibly in a process of preparation with an appropriate disposition .
2. Be able to demonstrate knowledge and understandings of Jesus, His teachings and the value and practices of the Catholic faith as defined by the diocesan Policy for Lifelong Faith Formation.
3. Be regularly attending Mass and celebrating Eucharist.
4. After a defined period of preparation, be able and willing to express their free decision to accept Confirmation, the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit, and a desire to continue to nurture their relationship with the Risen Christ through the life of the Church. Candidates for Confirmation should not be coerced into the celebration of the sacrament.

5. Have participated in the sacrament of Reconciliation as part of the immediate preparation for the celebration of Confirmation.

Adequate preparation, and proper disposition, for the sacrament is determined by the appointed pastoral leader, in consultation with the Confirmation coordinator, at the completion of the preparation process.

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## PASTORAL CONSIDERATIONS

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- Confirmation is to be celebrated in the parish of the candidate, as the normal place of liturgies celebrated by the parish.
- If, for serious reasons, candidates are unable to participate in their parish celebration of Confirmation, they are to request the assistance of the Confirmation coordinator and Parish Catechetical Leader in finding another parish celebration they may attend.
- Depending on circumstances or the pastoral needs of the community, Confirmation may be celebrated every year or every other year.
- A written request to the Bishop by the pastor or administrator is required to celebrate Confirmation outside the celebration of the Eucharist; the Bishop will make a determination whether to grant that permission.
- Scheduling Confirmation is to be done in consultation with the Bishop's Office. The Bishop's Office initiates this consultation through a letter that is sent out asking parishes to submit requested dates for Confirmation.

## CONFIRMATION CANDIDATE AGE REQUIREMENTS

Young people to be confirmed who have been adequately prepared according to diocesan guidelines and expectations are to be at least sixteen years-of-age (or a sophomore in high school) at the time they celebrate the sacrament.

For pastoral reasons, an individual may be confirmed at a younger age if he or she has the use of reason, is suitably instructed, properly disposed, and is able to renew his or her baptismal promises.

A young person who has not been baptized and is at least of catechetical age is to be prepared for Confirmation and First Holy Communion within the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA). This is also the case for those who have been baptized Christian and who are now seeking full communion with the Catholic Church. Other situations need evaluation by the Offices for Worship and Canonical Services. If someone has been confirmed in a Protestant denomination, that is not recognized as valid.

## CONFIRMATION CANDIDATE NAME REQUIREMENTS

While a Confirmation candidate may use his or her baptismal name to be confirmed, it is suggested that a name from the canon of Saints and Blesseds of the Church be studied and chosen as one to be emulated as a patron for Confirmation. Candidates without a Christian name should choose a Confirmation name from the canonized Saints or Blesseds. A candidate may be confirmed with *both* their baptismal name and the name of the Patron Saint or Blessed.

## THE BISHOP

The Bishop is the visible source and foundation of unity in the local Church and is the ordinary minister of the Sacrament of Confirmation. Bishops signify both the local diocesan church and the relationship of the local church to the universal church. "The administration of this sacrament by them demonstrates clearly its effect is to unite those who receive it more closely to the Church, to her apostolic origins, and to her mission of bearing witness to Christ."<sup>5</sup>

By canon law, priests possess the faculty of administering Confirmation when they baptize one who is no longer an infant or when they admit one who is already baptized into the full communion of the Catholic Church. In other cases, the Bishop may grant a presbyter the

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<sup>5</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1313

faculty to confirm baptized Catholics who desire the sacrament. Concession of the faculty is requested and granted in writing for each case. The grant of the faculty is to be noted in the Confirmation register. If possible, there should be some spiritual preparation beforehand, suited to the particular situation.

The Bishop is also the chief catechist with primary responsibility for catechesis in the diocese and for ensuring “catechists are adequately prepared for their task,” (*Catechesis Tradendae*, 63).

The Bishop, following consultation:

- Establishes sacramental policy and faith formation guidelines.
- Ensures the textbooks and catechetical resources used in parish are found on the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Conformity List

#### MISSION AND CONTINUING FORMATION: ALL FULLY INITIATED INTO THE CATHOLIC FAITH

Each parish is responsible for the ongoing catechesis and support of the newly confirmed as they live the life of a faithful Catholic every day. Parishes must continually reach out to these young people and invite them to participate as full members of the parish and giving them opportunities for ongoing formation for leadership and ministry within the parish.

#### LITURGICAL RITES

The Diocesan Office of Worship will assist local parishes in planning the celebration of Confirmation. Since the Bishop or his delegate is the presider, the Diocesan Office of Worship will provide approval for all liturgical planning.

#### DOCUMENTATION AND PARISH REGISTERS

Registration of the conferral of Confirmation is to take place in accord with the requirements of the *Code of Canon Law*, canons 894-896 and the sacramental records policy of the Diocese of Evansville.

Notification of the conferral of Confirmation must be sent to the Church of Baptism in accord with the above specifications.

In gratitude to the committee, Joe Paul Hayden, Michele Gondi, Marty Horning and Jack Tuinier for their labor of love, endless hours of work and commitment to the development of this document.



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## Sample CONFIRMATION CANDIDATE FORM

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_  
(First) (Middle) (Last)

Baptized: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ Church: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Baptized: \_\_\_\_\_

Where he/she received First Communion: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_

School Attending: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Street) (City, State) (Zip code)

Candidate's E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

### PARENT'S INFORMATION

Who does student live with: Both Parents \_\_\_ Mom \_\_\_ Dad \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Father's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Father's Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Guardian's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Guardian's Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

In the event of an emergency and if we can't reach parents or guardians, list another person we may contact.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Does your son/daughter have any medical condition or allergies that we should know about:

\_\_\_\_\_

Does your son/daughter have any medications that he/she carries with him/her: No \_\_\_ YES \_\_\_

(Please list) \_\_\_\_\_

I Authorize my son/daughter \_\_\_\_\_ to participate and be a part of (Parish)  
Confirmation Program. I authorize \_\_\_ I Do not Authorize \_\_\_ (Parish) Confirmation Program to

take and use photos and videos of my son/daughter to be posted in the Parish Website and other social media outlets (No personal information will be posted)

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(Parent's signature)

## SPONSOR INFORMATION

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Practicing Catholic: Yes: \_\_\_\_\_ No: \_\_\_\_\_  
(First) (Last)

Parish they Attend: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Street) (City: State) (Zip code)

Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Why I chose this person to be my sponsor:

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Saint's Name you would like to use as your confirmation Name:

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### OFFICE USE ONLY:

BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATE: \_\_\_\_\_ OR VERIFICATION: \_\_\_\_\_

SPONSOR'S INFO : \_\_\_\_\_ SAINT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ BISHOP'S LETTER: \_\_\_\_\_