

ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE  
SACRAMENTAL GUIDELINES  
FOR CONFIRMATION

APPROVED SEPTEMBER 1, 2022

Pastoral leaders have previously received guidance for the preparation and celebration of the Sacrament of confirmation through the document *The Seal of the Spirit*. The third edition of this document was approved by Cardinal Keeler in 2000, while the first edition and second edition were issued by Archbishop Borders in 1976 and 1983, respectively. These guidelines address matters concerning confirmation of adolescent candidates.

The present guidelines for Confirmation, fourth edition, are issued two decades after the third edition. This current edition reflects the Archdiocesan Sacramental Policies promulgated by Archbishop Lori in 2018, as well as the most recent catechetical documents from the Vatican and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The Archdiocesan policies for Confirmation can be found online <https://policy.archbalt.org/sacraments/103-confirmation/>

The *Order of Confirmation (OC)* is a 2016 English re-translation of the 1971 *Rite of Confirmation*. It follows the Holy See guidelines for translation of liturgical rites and is in conformity to the third edition of the *Roman Missal* (2011). The 2016 *Order of Confirmation* became the normative ritual text as of May 15, 2016.

## SOURCE DOCUMENTS

The following is a list of documents consulted in preparation for these guidelines. The documents appear in reverse chronological order, from newest to oldest.

### Papal Documents – Encyclicals, Post-Synodal Exhortations, *Motu Proprios*

- *Antiquum Ministerum* [On Instituting the Ministry of the Catechist], Apostolic Letter/Motu Proprio, Francis, 2021.
- *Christus Vivit* [Christ Is Alive], Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Francis, 2019.
- *Evangelii Gaudium* [Joy of the Gospel], Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Francis, 2013.
- *Sacramentum Caritatis* [On the Sacrament of Charity], Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Benedict XVI, 2007.
- *Codex Iuris Canonici* [Code of Canon Law], 1983  
[https://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/eng/documents/cic\\_introduction\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/eng/documents/cic_introduction_en.html)
- *Catechesi Tradendae* [On Catechesis in Our Time], Apostolic Exhortation, John Paul, 1979.
- *Evangelii Nuntiandi* [On Evangelization in the Modern World], Apostolic Exhortation, Paul VI, 1975.
- *Divinae Consortium Naturae* [Apostolic Constitution on the Sacrament of Confirmation], Paul VI, 1971.
- *Acerbo Nimis* [On the Teaching of Christian Doctrine], Encyclical Letter, Pius X, 1905.

### Conciliar Documents

- *Gaudium et Spes* [Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World], Paul VI, Vatican Council II, 1965.
- *Ad Gentes* [Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity], Paul VI, Vatican Council II, 1965.
- *Lumen Gentium* [Dogmatic Constitution on the Church], Paul VI, Vatican Council II, 1964.

### Curial Documents – CC; CDF; CDWDS, PCPNE

- *Directory for Catechesis*. Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization, 2020.
- *General Directory for Catechesis*. Congregation for the Clergy, 1997.
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Congregation on the Doctrine for the Faith, 1992.
- *General Catechetical Directory*. Congregation for the Clergy, 1971.
- *Rite of Confirmation*. Congregation for Divine Worship. 1971.
- *Quam singulari* [Decree on the age at which children are to be admitted to first Communion], Sacred Congregation of the Sacraments, 1910.

### USCCB Documents

- *Order of Confirmation*. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in collaboration with the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL), with approval from the Holy See, 2016.
- *Disciples Called to Witness: The New Evangelization*. Committee on Evangelization & Catechesis, 2012.
- *National Directory for Catechesis*. Committees on Education & Catechesis, 2005.
- *Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States*, Tenth Anniversary. Committee on Evangelization, USCCB, [1992], 2002.

## THEOLOGICAL AND CATECHETICAL PRINCIPLES

Specific theological and catechetical principles are the foundation for these pastoral guidelines. Although, it is possible to celebrate Confirmation with candidates of different ages, the theological principles are the same. The foundational catechetical principles are also the same; however, particular details will vary according to the age and circumstances of the candidate.

### 1. Theology of Confirmation – What the sacrament is / What its effects are

“Those who have been baptized continue on the path of Christian Initiation through the Sacrament of Confirmation, by which they receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, whom the Lord sent upon the Apostles at Pentecost.”<sup>1</sup> Confirmation is a sacrament of initiation (not graduation) which completes baptismal grace.<sup>2</sup> Completion of baptismal grace does not mean that the Holy Spirit was received incompletely at Baptism, but rather that the effects of baptismal graces are completed with Confirmation. These graces are understood in the following concrete ways: deepening of our roots as God’s children; establishing a firmer union with Christ, an increase in the gifts of the Holy Spirit; a more perfect bond with the Church; strength to live as Christian witnesses.<sup>3</sup> In other words, Confirmation offers the baptized a deeper union with Christ and the Church and it *strengthens* the missionary spirit. *This is not a sacrament of maturity.* Confirmation is not an achievement. It is a gift from God, to strengthen the baptized along the faith journey.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Order of Confirmation*, Introduction, no.1.

<sup>2</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*, no. 1285

**1285** 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 the sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace (*Roman Ritual*, Rite of Confirmation (*OC*), Introduction, 1). 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." (*LG* 11; Cf. *OC*, Introduction 2).

<sup>3</sup> *CCC*, no.1303

**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!";<sup>117</sup>
- 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;<sup>118</sup>
- 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:<sup>119</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *CCC*, no. 1308

**1308** Although Confirmation is sometimes called the "sacrament of Christian maturity," we must not confuse adult faith with the adult age of natural growth, nor forget that the baptismal grace is a grace of free, unmerited election and does not need "ratification" to become effective. St. Thomas reminds us of this:

Age of body does not determine age of soul. Even in childhood, man can attain spiritual maturity: as the book of Wisdom says: "For old age is not honored for length of time, or measured by number of years." Many children, through the strength of the Holy Spirit they have received, have bravely fought for Christ even to the shedding of their blood (St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* III,72,8, *ad* 2; Cf. *Wis* 4:8).

Also, Archdiocesan Sacramental Policies, no. **103.1.1.2.c** <https://policy.archbalt.org/sacraments/103-confirmation/>

**2. Timing of the Celebration, in relation to Baptism – different praxis, still the same theology concerning the effects of the sacrament.**

The Church in the West (the Latin Rite) and the Church in the East (the Churches of the Eastern Rites) hold different customs in the celebration of Confirmation, in relation to baptism, which stem from a common origin. In the first centuries of Christianity, Baptism and Confirmation were celebrated in one single liturgy. In time, the celebration of these two sacraments, **with infants**, was separated into two distinct liturgies in the West, but it was retained as one single celebration in the East.<sup>5</sup> However, in the Western Church, in the case of an unbaptized adult, both sacraments are also celebrated in the same liturgy. It is important to recognize that these are valid varied expressions of the same theology: **a completion of baptismal grace.**<sup>6</sup>

**3. Celebration of Confirmation within Mass or without Mass**

Although the Church provides a ritual for celebration of Confirmation without Mass, the Second Vatican Council explained that it is preferable that the sacrament of Confirmation be celebrated within Mass so that the intimate connection of Confirmation with all of Christian Initiation is made clear. The completion of Christian initiation is the Eucharist, the partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> CCC, nos. 1290-1292.

**1290** In the first centuries, Confirmation generally comprised one single celebration with Baptism, forming with it a "double sacrament," according to the expression of St. Cyprian. Among other reasons, the multiplication of infant baptisms all through the year, the increase of rural parishes, and the growth of dioceses often prevented the bishop from being present at all baptismal celebrations. In the West, the desire to reserve the completion of Baptism to the bishop caused the temporal separation of the two sacraments. The East has kept them united, so that Confirmation is conferred by the priest who baptizes. However, he can do so only with the "myron" consecrated by a bishop (*CCEO*, Can. 695 § 1; 696 § 1).

**1291** A custom of the Roman Church facilitated the development of the Western practice: a double anointing with sacred chrism after Baptism. The first anointing of the neophyte on coming out of the baptismal bath was performed by the priest; it was completed by a second anointing on the forehead of the newly baptized by the bishop (St. Hippolytus, *Trad. Ap.* 21:Sch 11,80-95). The first anointing with sacred chrism, by the priest, has remained attached to the baptismal rite; it signifies the participation of the one baptized in the prophetic, priestly, and kingly offices of Christ. If Baptism is conferred on an adult, there is only one post-baptismal anointing, that of Confirmation

**1292** The practice of the Eastern Churches gives greater emphasis to the unity of Christian initiation. That of the Latin Church more clearly expresses the communion of the new Christian with the bishop as guarantor and servant of the unity, catholicity and apostolicity of his Church, and hence the connection with the apostolic origins of Christ's Church.

<sup>6</sup> Archdiocesan Sacramental Policies, no. **103.1.1.2.b** <https://policy.archbalt.org/sacraments/103-confirmation/>

<sup>7</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium* no.71.  
*Order of Confirmation*, Introduction, no. 13.

#### 4. Catechesis for the Sacrament of Confirmation

The catechumenate model, an ancient practice of disciple formation for the unbaptized was restored after Vatican II. This process is an integrated process that connects Scripture, catechesis, liturgical life, and missionary work.<sup>8</sup> Given the nature of the catechumenate process, the Church has instructed all dioceses to employ the catechumenate model for all catechesis.<sup>9</sup> This does not refer to duplicating every single step and rite which constitutes the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adult; however, it calls for a path modeled on the process of initiation. This calls for an initial an on-going evangelization, an integrated catechesis, and a *mystagogical* (post-sacramental) catechesis.<sup>10</sup> The specific catechetical content will follow in the next section.

### ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE PASTORAL GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING AND ACCOMPANYING CONFIRMATION CANDIDATES

#### 1. Age of Confirmation

The Code of Canon Law states that, “The sacrament of confirmation is to be conferred on **the faithful at about the age of discretion** unless the conference of bishops has determined another age, or there is danger of death, or in the judgment of the minister a grave cause suggests otherwise.” The USCCB permits each Bishop to determine the age of Confirmation in his diocese.

**In the Archdiocese of Baltimore, youth candidates, who were baptized in infancy, are generally confirmed between 14-16 years of age.** Thus, Confirmation of adolescent candidates is celebrated ordinarily when they are in eighth through tenth grade.<sup>11</sup>

**When the confirmation candidates are unbaptized children older than 7 years old, and are being prepared through the process of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, adapted for children or youth, *Confirmation will be celebrated immediately following Baptism, in the same Liturgy, according to the Rite.*** In other words, catechumens older than 7 years of age will receive the three sacraments of initiation in the ancient order – Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist at ONE celebration, in

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<sup>8</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium* no.64-66; *Ad Gentes*, no.14; *Christus Dominus*, no. 14.

<sup>9</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*, no 90; *National Directory for Catechesis*, p. 116; *Directory for Catechesis*, no.61, 64.

<sup>10</sup> *Directory for Catechesis*, nos. 64-72.

<sup>11</sup> *Code of Canon Law (Codex Iuris Canonici CIC)* 891  
Archdiocesan Sacramental Policies, no. **103.1.1.2** <https://policy.archbalt.org/sacraments/103-confirmation/>

accordance to Canonical and Liturgical laws.<sup>12</sup> This practice reflects and expresses the theological unity of the Sacraments of Initiation.

## 2. Preparation for Confirmation

Preparation for Confirmation takes into account the reality that the preparation is process that begins as soon as the candidate has heard the Good News. Since the formation of the faithful should be modeled after the catechumenal model, the following are important components of preparation:

### a. Evangelization

The preparation of the candidates begins with introduction (or re-introduction) to the Good News. Pope Francis summarizes the content of this proclamation, known as the *kerygma* as follows: God loves us, God sent his Son to save us, Christ is alive in his Spirit.<sup>13</sup> Every effort should be made to offer opportunities for the candidates for Confirmation to hear the Good News and to encounter the living God in their lives. The witness of those who have encountered God is extremely essential.

### b. Catechesis

The catechetical component of preparation for Confirmation is uniquely important. It is important to note that the catechetical component is not simply a series of ‘classroom classes’. If catechesis is to be fruitful, it needs to be integrated with Scripture, prayer life, liturgical life, and apostolic outreach.<sup>14</sup>

The *National Directory for Catechesis* notes that catechesis for Confirmation:

- Teaches that Confirmation increases and deepens the grace of Baptism, imprinting an indelible character on the soul.
- Teaches that Confirmation strengthens the baptismal conferral of the Holy Spirit on those confirmed in order to incorporate them more firmly in Christ, strengthen their bond with the Church, associate them more closely with the Church’s mission increase in them the gifts of the Holy spirit, and help them to bear witness to the Christian faith in words and deeds.
- Teaches about the role of the Holy Spirit, his gifts, and his fruits.
- Is developmentally appropriate and includes retreat experiences (see item #c below)

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<sup>12</sup> CIC, 866; *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, nos. 215, 305; National Statutes for the Catechumenate, nos. 18-19.

*Order of Confirmation*, Introduction, no.11  
Archdiocesan Sacramental Policies, no. **103.1.1** <https://policy.archbalt.org/sacraments/103-confirmation/>

<sup>13</sup> *Christus Vivit [Christ Is Alive]*, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Francis, 2019, nos. 111-13.3

<sup>14</sup> *Director for Catechesis*, nos. 79-89.

- Includes instruction on the Rite [Order] of Confirmation and its basic symbols: the imposition of hands, the anointing with Sacred Chrism, and the words of the sacramental formula.
- Ensures that parents and sponsors are involved in the catechetical preparation of the children for Confirmation.
- Teaches that the bishop is the ordinary minister of the Sacrament of Confirmation (in the Eastern Catholic Churches, however, the priest is the ordinary minister of Chrismation).<sup>15</sup>

**In addition to the above points noted in the *National Directory for Catechesis*,** the catechetical component of Confirmation preparation should emphasize and encourage the on-going practice of the faith and should reinforce that all Catholics are to continue to educate themselves in the faith throughout their lifetimes. This is also indicated in #d) below.

**The length of time for catechesis should be accommodated to the needs of the candidate.** Depending on the reality of the parish and the circumstances of the candidate, the process of formation can be accommodated. This requires great pastoral care and flexibility. Canon Law communicates clearly, that candidates who have reached the age of reason (older than 7 years old) must be suitably instructed, properly disposed, and able to renew the baptismal promises.<sup>16</sup> The instruction alone is not enough. The candidate needs to have the right disposition to celebrate the Sacrament.

**Youth ministry should not be seen as existing solely for the purpose of preparing youth for Confirmation.** Instead, preparation for Confirmation is one of the steps along the journey of faith formation, whether this happens in middle school or high school.

**c. Opportunities For Reflection And Recollection**

Retreat experiences are an essential component of preparation for Confirmation. This can take place in a variety of ways. **An overnight retreat is not mandatory, nor is a particular number of hours of retreat required.** What is important is to offer opportunities where the candidates, are able to reflect on their journey. The capacity to reflect varies greatly along the different age groups, genders, temperament, and previous experience.

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<sup>15</sup> *National Directory for Catechesis*, p. 123.

<sup>16</sup> *CIC*, no. 889.2

Archdiocesan Sacramental Policies, no. **103.1.1.d** [https://policy.archbalt.org/sacraments/103-confirmation/Order of Confirmation](https://policy.archbalt.org/sacraments/103-confirmation/Order%20of%20Confirmation), no.12.



#### **d. On-Going Catechesis After The Sacrament Is Received**

Preparation for Confirmation does not conclude the day of the celebration. It also needs to include on-going catechesis after the Sacrament. The role of youth ministry in this stage of formation is very important.

### **3. Discerning Readiness**

An essential pastoral duty of those who minister to and with Confirmation candidates is to discern the candidates' readiness to receive the sacrament. This is not something that can be established simply with a test that measures the knowledge recalled. Although, intellectual knowledge is important, the journey of discipleship is a journey of interior conversion. This requires careful conversations with the candidates.

### **4. Selection of a New Name**

The renewal of the baptismal promises expresses the intimate connection between Baptism and Confirmation, which the Second Vatican Council stressed. In order to reflect this connection, candidates for Confirmation should be encouraged to use their baptismal name. Although it has become common practice to select a 'Confirmation name', neither the Order of Confirmation nor the Code of Canon Law prescribe the selection of a new name. The practice of selecting a patron saint is a worthy practice and may continue.

### **5. Preparation And Responsibility Of The Community**

The community has a key role in the preparation for Confirmation. By virtue of their own Baptism and Confirmation, they are called to be missionary and thus be active in the making of disciples. The Ritual reminds us that, "One of the highest responsibilities of the People of God is to prepare the baptized to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation."<sup>17</sup> Therefore, the pastor and pastoral leaders need to be attentive to on-going adult faith formation, such that those who are fully initiated continue to deepen their faith and missionary spirit.

Parents hold a special place in the formation of their children. They are their children's first catechists. The family is the first place where children hear the Good News and the first place where they learn to live the Good News.<sup>18</sup> Parents are called "to show concern for the initiation of their children to the sacramental life both by forming and gradually increasing a spirit of faith in the children and, sometimes with the help of their instructors who are responsible for catechetical formation, by preparing them for the fruitful reception of the Sacraments of Confirmation and the Eucharist."<sup>19</sup> Therefore, the ongoing formation of the parents is essential.

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<sup>17</sup> *Order of Confirmation*, Introduction, no. 3.

<sup>18</sup> *Directory for Catechesis*, no. 231.

<sup>19</sup> *Order of Confirmation*, Introduction, no. 3

## LIST OF APPROVED RESOURCES FOR CONFIRMATION PREPARATION

**Please consult the USCCB list of textbooks, which are in conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church***

<https://www.usccb.org/committees/catechism/conformity-review-list>

This list is updated regularly. The list as of Feb 22, 2022 appears here

<https://www.usccb.org/resources/Current%20Conformity%20List.pdf>

Sacramental Preparation Materials [These materials are only a part of catechetical preparation and do not reflect a complete presentation of all of the elements contained in the Catechism of the Catholic Church that should be present in catechetical formation.]

Adventure Catechism Series: Confirmation Adventure Catechism Media S/P ©2021

Anointed in the Spirit – A Middle School Confirmation Program Saint Mary’s Press S/P & TM/CM ©2010

Anointed in the Spirit – A High School Confirmation Program Saint Mary’s Press S/P & TM/CM ©2011

Be Sealed Pauline Books and Media S/P&TM ©1998

Believe Celebrate Live Confirmation William H. Sadlier, Inc. S/P&TM/CM ©2018

Call to Celebrate: Confirmation (Older Adolescents) Harcourt (OSV Curriculum) S/P&TM/CM ©2008

Call to Celebrate: Confirmation (Younger Adolescents) Harcourt (OSV Curriculum) S/P&TM/CM ©2008

Celebrating Our Faith: Confirmation Harcourt (OSV Curriculum) S/P&TM ©2000

Chosen: Your Journey Toward Confirmation Ascension Press S/P & TM/CM © 2016

Christ Our Life: Confirmed in the Spirit Loyola Press S/P&TM ©1997

Confirmation RCL Benziger S/P&TM/CM ©2007

Confirmation: Gifted with the Spirit (6-8) Pflaum Publishing Group S/P&TM/CM ©2010

Confirmation, Inspired by the Spirit William H. Sadlier, Inc. S/P&TM/CM ©2012

Confirmation: Receiving the Gift of the Spirit (9-12) Pflaum Publishing Group S/P&TM/CM ©2010

Confirmed in a Faithful Community: Candidate’s Handbook Saint Mary’s Press S/P ©2006

Confirmed in a Faithful Community: Candidates Handbook (Immediate Preparation) Saint Mary’s Press S/P ©2006

Confirmed in the Spirit (7-9) Loyola Press S/P&TM ©2007, 2013

Gifted with the Spirit-Confirmation: Junior High Edition Pflaum Publishing Group S/P&TM/CM ©2018

Gifted with the Spirit-Confirmation: Senior High Edition Pflaum Publishing Group S/P&TM/CM ©2018

The Sacrament of Confirmation New Hope Publications S/P ©2011, 2013

The Sacrament of Confirmation: A Complete Preparation

Send Out Your Spirit: A Confirmation Candidate's Handbook for Faith, Ave Maria Press S/P&TM ©2003, 2010

Signs of Grace: You Are Sent (Primary) Augustine Institute S/P ©2021

The Spirit Sets Us Free: Confirmation Prep for Youth William H. Sadlier, Inc. S/P&TM ©2000