



Diocese of Venice in Florida

Confirmation Guidelines

Preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation: “*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” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1309).

The Sacrament of Reconciliation for Candidates: “To receive Confirmation one must be in a state of grace. One should receive the sacrament of Penance in order to be cleansed for the gift of the Holy Spirit. More intense prayer should prepare one to receive the strength and graces of the Holy Spirit with docility and readiness to act” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1310). Thus, it is fitting to organize a penance service or to encourage the candidates to go to individual Confession, near the day on which they are to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Sponsors: Each candidate is to have one male **or** one female sponsor for Confirmation (who cannot be their father or mother). “To emphasize the unity of the two sacraments, it is appropriate that this be one of the baptismal godparents” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*). The sponsor is to take care that the confirmed person behaves as a true witness of Christ and faithfully fulfills the obligations inherent in this Sacrament. It is desirable to choose as sponsor the one who undertook the same function in Baptism. The sponsor must have completed the sixteenth year of age, 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. Further, the sponsor cannot be bound by any canonical penalty and cannot be the father or mother of the one to be confirmed. A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community is not to participate as a sponsor, except together with a Catholic sponsor and then only as a witness.

Study guide and Bishop’s questions: The bishop expects that the candidates know the material enclosed in the study guide and to be prepared to correctly answer questions on this material. The study guide is available online at the Diocese of Venice’s website.

Confirmation names: Those who are to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation are to choose the name of a saint (if they are male, the name of a male saint; if they are female, the name of a female saint). The candidates are also to wear a nametag with only their Confirmation

name (which may also be their baptismal name) printed in large and legible letters for the bishop to read.

Dress: Dress should be tasteful and keeping with the dignity of a liturgical event. Coat and tie are suitable for men and dresses or professional style suits for women. Bare shoulders and spaghetti straps are not allowed. Shawls should be available in such cases. As the bishop will be anointing the candidate's forehead, it is also helpful that the candidates' hairstyle enable His Excellency to do so.

Stoles: The practice of having the candidates wear "stoles" is to be discontinued. Below is the response addressed to the *Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy Newsletter*:

The traditional vesture of the newly baptized is the white robe. There is no indication in liturgical tradition that the stole – which properly is the vesture of ordained ministers - was used for neophytes. The current practice in some places of using stoles at Confirmation seems to have arisen out of the laudable desire to provide a symbol signifying the confirmands' participation in the life and ministry of the Church. However, the distinction between the universal priesthood of all the baptized and the ministerial priesthood of the ordained is blurred when the distinctive garb of ordained ministers is used in this manner. To emphasize the relationship between confirmation and baptism, a white garment might be used at confirmation - just as the baptismal robe was used to clothe the newly baptized. Use of stole, however, should be avoided for the reasons already indicated.

Choice of Music: After reviewing the prayers and texts, the careful selection of hymns, antiphons and acclamations is essential. Criteria that should be used in this decision include:

Is the music appropriate for the liturgy, the season of the liturgical year, and any particular feast celebrated that day? Does the music reflect the liturgy being celebrated? How does it express the prayers to be proclaimed, the theology of the sacrament, or the inspiration of God's Word to be proclaimed during the liturgy? Do the lyrics convey Catholic theology and belief? Is the music of good quality? Will those gathered for the celebration consider the hymn beautiful? Does the hymn have a history in the Church's tradition?

Rehearsal: Make sure there is a rehearsal with the altar servers before the Mass.

Procession: The procession enters from the vestibule of the church. The cross bearer leads the procession, followed by two acolytes with candles. (If incense is to be used, the thurifer is to precede the cross bearer). The candidates and sponsors may process in, following the cross bearer and before the lector. They are followed by the clergy (if attending in choir attire) deacon (if present), the concelebrants, bishop, and finally, the miter and crosier bearers. Before Mass, the pastor should welcome the Bishop and introduce any other priests participating in the Mass. If there are adults to be confirmed, please notify the Bishop in advance so that he can prepare his homily appropriately.

Thurifer (if incense is used)

Cross bearer

Processional candle bearers

Lector

Candidates with sponsors (sponsors optional)

Deacon

Concelebrants

Bishop

Miter and Crosier bearers

Confirmation ritual:

1. **Introduction of candidates:** Immediately after the Gospel, the pastor makes some comment to the effect that the candidates have been prepared, and are ready to receive the Sacrament. The pastor also introduces (states the names of the candidates), either as a group or as individuals.
2. **Homily:** After the names have been read, the bishop will give the homily.
3. **Renewal of Baptismal promises:** Immediately after the homily. Only the candidates are to stand for the renewal of their Baptismal promises.
4. **Imposition of Hands:** The imposition of hands by the Bishop is done over the entire group of candidates.
5. **Anointing:** The candidates are to come forward two-by-two (along with their sponsor) and are to move close to the bishop so that he can easily reach their foreheads. The sponsor is to place his/her right hand on the right shoulder of the candidate. The bishop will ask a priest to stand to his right and hold the container for oils. The bishop will take the Chrism and anoint the forehead of the candidate with the words: **BE SEALED WITH THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.** The candidate is to respond: **AMEN.** The bishop will then say to the candidate: **THE PEACE OF THE LORD BE WITH YOU.** The candidate will respond: **AND WITH YOUR SPIRIT.** Both the sponsor and the candidate are then to return to their places. The Bishop cannot shake hands since his hand is covered with the Holy Chrism.

N.B. Please start singing *Veni Sancte Spiritu* or some other hymn dedicated to the Holy Spirit during the anointing with Chrism, but only after three or four confirmandi have received the Sacrament. In this way, the words of the Sacrament are heard before the singing begins.

6. **Ablutions:** A pitcher containing water, along with a bowl containing water and some soap, lemon slices, and a cloth, should be available for the bishop to wash his hands after the anointing. For this, the bishop is seated in the presider's chair. A large white towel should also be brought to place on the bishop's lap so as to prevent soiling the vestments.

7. **Prayer of the Faithful**: The bishop introduces the Prayer of the Faithful. This is found in the Confirmation Ritual. Also to be included is: FOR VOCATIONS TO THE PRIESTHOOD AND RELIGIOUS LIFE TO SERVE THE CHURCH, WE PRAY TO THE LORD.

8. The Creed is not said.

9. **Recessional**: The same order as the procession into the church.

10. Other notes:

- An altar server should be ready to bring the Sacramentary to the bishop at the Chair for the orations at the beginning and end of the Liturgy, and to be available to hold the *Confirmandi Ritual* book for the Renewal of Baptismal Promises as well as for the Imposition of Hands.
- The bishop will wear a chasuble which is the required vesture for the principal celebrant at all celebrations of the Eucharist.
- The offertory gifts are to be brought to the bishop in front of the altar.
- Concelebrating priests are asked to wear alb and stole or a chasuble. The liturgical color for Confirmation is red unless it is celebrated on a Sunday or Solemnity. In these cases, the particular color for that day is used.
- After the final prayer at the conclusion of the liturgy, the bishop will offer some final remarks. The bishop asks the pastor to thank those who are involved in the Confirmation preparation, and to mention the catechists by name.
- Concelebrants should come to the altar immediately after the Prayer over the Gifts in order to be present for the Introduction of the Preface. This is normal procedure for all concelebrations.
- After Communion, altar servers will provide for the ablution of the bishop's hands.
- The bishop will bring a vessel for Holy Chrism.

Frequently Asked Questions: The bishop is correctly addressed as, “Bishop”, or “Your Excellency.”

Regarding when the bishop uses his crosier and miter:

Procession: Miter Crosier

Readings: Miter

Gospel: Crosier (used after the words, “a reading from the Holy Gospel according to...”)

Anointing Miter Crosier

Formal Blessing Miter Crosier

Photography: So as not to interfere with the ceremony, photography is not permitted during the ceremony, However, the bishop will meet with the confirmandi and their sponsor either individually, or for a group picture, depending upon the tradition and desire of the particular parish.

The Proof and Registration of the Conferral of Confirmation:

- Please recall that after Confirmation, the names of those confirmed, the minister, the parents, the sponsors, AND the place and date of the conferral of Confirmation are to be recorded in a permanent register kept in the parish office.
- Notification also must be sent to the parish of the place of Baptism, so that a notation is made in the baptismal register according to the norm of Canon 535.

Many thanks: The bishop very much appreciates all that is done to plan for a beautiful liturgy, especially as regards the music and coordination of the Confirmation ceremony.