

PASTORAL QUESTIONS

1. Why a six month preparation process for Confirmation?

Six months represents a time frame that calls us to a focused preparation for the sacrament of confirmation. We cannot “get everything in” that every young person needs to know about being Catholic in six months. We can focus on this particular sacrament, on the gifts of the Spirit and on our relationship with Church. The fact is that even though the sacramental preparation process is shorter (significantly shorter for those parishes that have been doing a two year process), the formation of adolescents is recognized as a six year process from grades six through twelve. In many parishes, there is no catechesis (or anything else) for adolescents once they have been confirmed. This is not acceptable. We must invite, energize, and partner with adolescents throughout their teen years in a comprehensive way that recognizes their gifts, needs and importance to our parish communities. Six months is also a period of time that teenagers can deal with (it doesn't seem like forever) and it allows for maximum flexibility within parish scheduling. Additionally, because of the busy schedules of our youth and adult leaders, a parish could offer a January through May preparation and an August through December preparation process (this does not mean that you would have to have two confirmation masses). The confirmation mass could be in January, May or June depending upon when your year began.

2. What if our parish doesn't have a comprehensive youth ministry process grades 6-12?

There is a legitimate concern in parishes that have not developed a youth ministry process and have instead put their time, energy and resources into a one or two year confirmation preparation program. Often, this has been done in reaction to the concern that adolescents will not continue in religious education after confirmation. If our goals for young people are: to involve them in the life mission and work of the church; invite them into discipleship as adolescents; and respond to their total personal and spiritual needs, as the document: Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry instructs, then catechesis alone will not be effective. Parishes that do not offer a comprehensive youth ministry process must evaluate how they are responding to young people in their parish community in light of the goals of Renewing the Vision. This evaluation process can move a parish from providing simple activities for adolescents to providing a process that recognizes their gifts and calls them into parish life to use those gifts. The Office of Youth Ministry/Adolescent Catechesis is committed to supporting parishes in evaluating their present offerings to young people, developing a tailored comprehensive youth ministry process, training leaders for this ministry, and consulting with parishes as needs arise (from one month to a year).

3. Why is it said that religious education is not completed with Confirmation?

Confirmation, as an initiation sacrament, is really a beginning not an end. Through Confirmation catechesis we become more aware of the ongoing responsibilities in living out a Catholic Christian life. Our faith relationship with God is one that must constantly grow and change as we mature. Though Confirmation is a part of our growth, receiving Eucharist regularly and participation in ongoing religious formation (classroom model,

retreat model, small faith-sharing group model, etc), service, and the life of the parish faith community therefore, is a life-long process of maturity.

4. Why is Confirmation celebrated in parishes rather than in Catholic Schools?

The parish is a community of people who offer support to fellow Christians throughout life. School ends but parish life into which the person is initiated keeps going on and ideally continues to offer support through the future: weddings, births, baptism, etc. Each young person has become a part of the fabric of that parish even if he/she should eventually move away. Some aspect of that person's life, through family and friends, will remain in that particular parish.

5. Do Catholic students need to be involved in their parish Confirmation catechesis?

Because Confirmation is a parish community celebration uniting all persons who seek the sacraments with the other members of the parish, the candidates should go through some part of the catechesis together. The goal is to unify. If Confirmation catechesis is well designed it will complement existing programs, building on what is being taught in both school and parish religious education classes. No one should be forced to sit in classes that present materials that have already been offered to him/her. Dialogue between school and parish personnel is essential. Also, the catechetical portion of the preparation process is not the entire preparation process. There should be several elements available through the youth ministry program beginning in grade 6 (or 7 depending on the parish) including service, prayer and worship, community life and retreat opportunities. Not every young person will avail themselves of each of these elements **fully** but there should be opportunities for them throughout their teen years

6. How much influence should parents have on a young person's decision for Confirmation?

Parents can encourage their young persons to consider going into Confirmation preparation at a particular time, offering support and encouragement. However, the actual decision to receive or delay the sacrament should not be made by the parents. Parishes should assist parents by offering them formation as well.

7. May parents be Confirmation sponsors?

According to Canon Law 874, parents may not be sponsors to their children. Parents may present them along with their sponsor to the Bishop during the ceremony.

8 May a candidate have more than one sponsor?

Yes, but only one is actually designated as the liturgical sponsor, standing with the candidate at Confirmation.

9. May someone from a long distance be a sponsor and someone else represent him/her at the ceremony as proxy?

Yes, however, it is recommended that the person who served as their godparent at their baptism also serve as their sponsor so that the link between baptism and confirmation be maintained. In the event that this is not possible, someone in the parish community or nearby should be chosen to sponsor so that he/she can become more involved in the candidate's preparation.

10. What does RCIA have to do with Confirmation?

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, reviving the ancient catechumenate while designed for adults teaches us a great deal about all sacraments. It reminds us that conversion takes place in stages, that sponsors are an important companion on the faith journey and that catechesis should first be formational and then informational. There may be a number of young people who have not been baptized who will go through the RCIA adapted for children and at Easter receive all of the sacraments of initiation including confirmation. *See the section on RCIA and RCIA adapted for children.*

11. Can mentally disabled persons be confirmed?

Yes, catechesis should be simple and basic, in accord with the person's abilities. (Please see the **SPECIAL NEEDS** section.)

12. If a young person was confirmed at birth may he/she be confirmed again?

No, Confirmation may not be repeated. The young persons can be encouraged to participate in the preparation and celebration. At the time of Confirmation, they would simply be greeted and blessed rather than anointed.

13. Does one need to be confirmed prior to receiving the sacrament of Matrimony?

If they can do so without serious inconvenience, Catholics who have not yet received the sacrament of Confirmation are to receive it before being admitted to marriage. (Code of Canon Law #1065)

Confirmation should be celebrated before the sacrament of Marriage. If one has not been confirmed and presents himself/herself for marriage, then Confirmation should be given if the person can be adequately prepared and Confirmation is scheduled in that parish or nearby before the marriage takes place. If it is impossible to prepare someone for Confirmation adequately before marriage, then the priest should proceed with the wedding but use every means possible to see that the person is confirmed on the first occasion after the marriage has taken place.

14. Why is it no longer necessary to take a Confirmation name?

As greater emphasis is placed on the intimate connection between Baptism and

Confirmation, the baptismal name is seen as having greater significance. Candidates may choose a Confirmation name if they desire. This is especially true if the Baptism name is not a saint's name.

15. Why is the use of stoles for Confirmation candidates discouraged?

The current practice in some places of using stoles at Confirmation seems to have arisen out of the desire to provide a symbol signifying the candidate's 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. It should, therefore, be avoided.

16. Is it necessary that every adolescent attend a confirmation retreat during their preparation process?

The purpose of a confirmation retreat or having adolescents participate in a retreat during their confirmation preparation process is to: 1. Enable the adolescents to experience God in an environment other than the classroom; 2. Have a longer period of time together to develop peer relationships and relationships with the adult leaders; 3. Develop specific catechetical topics and mix them with prayer and worship experiences, and community - building experiences. Retreats are a tried and true method for evangelizing and catechizing teens in a relationship centered environment. For these reasons named, it is appropriate that some kind of retreat experience be offered during the confirmation preparation process especially at the beginning of the process. It should never be that because someone is unable to attend a particular retreat that they are not allowed to be confirmed. Once again, if your parish has developed a comprehensive approach in youth ministry, retreats will be going on throughout the 6 year process. Many adolescents find themselves afraid to attend a retreat if they have never done so and they are being forced to attend during preparation for confirmation.

17. Is it necessary that every adolescent perform projects of service during their preparation process?

Service projects are increasingly becoming a part of Confirmation preparation because of the close relationship between faith and actions (service). The goal of service projects is to enable young people to experience being "Christ-like". Jesus served those in need not to feel good about himself but to make a connection with each person especially those with burdens. It is in this way that we understand that all of us are "one" in the "body of Christ".

Service is also good for people. Search Institute out of Minneapolis surveying over one million teenagers has determined that young people who give in service to others at least one hour a week are less "at risk". Even with this understanding of service however, rigid programs with large numbers of hour requirements should be examined to find if they are, in reality, achieving the goals named above. Service is a key component of a comprehensive youth ministry process and should be "available" to adolescents from 6th

grade through high school graduation. It should not be the experience that young people only encounter service as a “hoop” for confirmation.

18. What do we do with adolescents who have had little formal catechesis but have been baptized and want to be confirmed?

It is important to mentor young people who are not appropriately prepared so that they can receive the sacrament of confirmation. First though, let's be sure that every teen doesn't feel or believe that they have to receive the sacrament of confirmation because they are fifteen years of age. Fifteen is the minimum age that one can receive the sacrament of confirmation but one could also receive the sacrament at age sixteen, twenty, and so on. If an adolescent feels called to receive the sacrament however it is our duty to prepare them appropriately. . This is one of the reasons that it is crucial to develop the sponsor relationship at the very beginning of the preparation process and not later. Each sponsor (a local person) with a little bit of guidance from the confirmation team can help their confirmand “fill in the gaps” that may be present through their lack of on-going catechetical involvement. Mentoring implies the development of a growing, caring, and guiding relationship. There are several good “how to mentor adolescents” books available through St. Mary Press, Group books, and Youth Specialties. See the bibliography for the notations.

IF THEY HAVE RECEIVED NO FORMAL CATECHESIS AT ALL
(UNCATECHIZED) SEE THE RCIA SECTION IN THIS RESOURCE PACKET.

19. What about rural communities?

Yes, adolescents in rural communities require more than a formal classroom religious education program. Because they are adolescents, a relationship centered approach is key. The fact is that rural and small town youth are not as sheltered from social ills as many people believe. In a Gallop poll, rural youth were just as likely to respond that they had consumed alcohol in the past month as their urban and suburban peers (18 percent) and were more likely (31%) than their urban and suburban peers (29%) to report that alcohol had been a cause of problems in their families. Comprehensive youth ministry processes will look and feel different than their urban/suburban counterparts. A new planning resource for rural communities is available from the National Federation of Catholic Youth Ministry entitled: Youth Ministry in Rural and Small Town Settings: A Planning Resource, 1998, St. Mary's Press (also available from the Office of Youth Ministry).

Sample PRE-CONFIRMATION CATECHESIS QUESTIONNAIRE

You could use a questionnaire like this one to determine the readiness of candidates and to help catechists tailor the preparation sessions to the spirituality and the needs of the group they will be with. This is not intended to be used as a pass or fail test which would determine if a person could continue in the preparation process.

What does the Catholic Church mean to you?

Why do you think you were baptized?

Who is God?

How does the Holy Spirit work in your life?

Describe Jesus as portrayed in scripture stories.

How would you characterize your relationship with Jesus? Ex. Just beginning; really growing; at a stand still; I don't have a relationship with Jesus. Explain your response.

How often do you attend Mass?

What are some things that you'd like to do for your parish in the future?

Why do you want to begin the Confirmation classes?

What questions do you have?

INSCRIPTION

If there is a decision that the person should enter into Confirmation preparation, an inscription or commitment could be signed.

CANDIDATE'S INSCRIPTION PROMISE

I _____,

a member of _____ Parish
desire to affirm my belief in Jesus and His Church.

Therefore, I ask to become a candidate for the Sacrament of Confirmation and to enter the program of preparation being offered by my parish.

To the best of my ability, I agree to take part in the activities that make up the program of preparation.

I accept the responsibility to open my mind and heart to the Holy Spirit during this time of preparation.

I understand that the keeping of this Inscription Promise during the coming months is an indication of readiness on my part for the sacrament of Confirmation.

Signature _____

Date _____

AN INTERVIEW FOLLOWING CONFIRMATION CATECHESIS

Following the catechetical preparation period the candidate should have an opportunity to discuss his/her readiness to receive the sacrament with a member of the Confirmation team. A sample interview follows:

SETTING: Pleasant, prayerful — Bible, candle flower on small table with two chairs facing each other.

GREETING: Smile — share gentle comments to calm candidate and yourself. Invite candidate to be seated comfortably.

PRAYER: Several options or combinations:

- a. Scripture of student's choice
- b. Scripture of your choice
- c. Possible Scripture readings by either you or student:
John 3:16; John 14:26; John 15:9; John 14:16
- d. Formal prayer such as Our Father, Hail Mary, etc.
- e. Spontaneous prayer

Ask candidate what his/her favorite lesson was or which one he/she learned from the most.

Read description of individual and group service projects — ask student to share that experience and how he/she felt about the activities. Ask if there are some things he/she would want to continue doing in the future.

QUESTIONS: Depending upon how previous discussion has gone, you may question student on other subjects. Possible questions:

1. What do you think about Confirmation and why is it your choice to be confirmed?
2. What does being a Catholic mean to you?
3. How do you feel you will participate in the parish community after Confirmation?
4. How important are prayer and receiving the sacraments to you?
5. How do you feel you may participate in the celebration of the Mass that will be different from before this year?
6. Tell me some things about Jesus and how his life affects your life.
7. How can you witness to your Catholic faith in _____
(our city/town)?
8. What do the beatitudes have to do with what you do with your life?
9. What would you want the Church to do for you as a young adult?

COMMENTS: Make a few general comments about the student's readiness for being confirmed.

DEVELOPING COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

When parishioners are made aware of and given the opportunity to be involved in the Confirmation preparation in the parish, they are challenged to look more deeply into their own faith lives. It can be a time of renewal and recommitment for them. The candidates benefit through the Christian experiences and witness that the already initiated Catholics share with them. All should be called forth to witness, teach, encourage, question and pray for the candidates. Confirmation teams might heighten awareness in the following ways:

1. Announcements through bulletins, newsletters, posters, periodic letters from the pastor concerning who the candidates are, what is happening in the preparation catechesis, service projects, information on the celebration itself and reports on follow-up.
2. Some formal acknowledgement by the community of those beginning Confirmation preparation. This could be done at the Sunday liturgies.
3. Frequent reminders to pray for the candidates on Sunday and through special notices. Some parishes have developed a method of several parishioners praying for each candidate and a written expression of this prayer support is given.
4. Special Sunday fellowships with candidates present.
5. Prayer services for the candidates and the parish community. (NOTE: These should not be in the form of a reconciliation service unless more than one is offered.)
6. The celebration of the sacrament should be during a time when the community can attend. An invitation should be given to the entire community to join the celebration.
7. Assist in welcoming the candidates into membership in parish groups and organizations.

Younger children in Catholic schools or parish catechesis could pray for, discuss and make posters showing their support for the candidates.

Confirmation candidates occasionally join catechumens in prayer and sharing.

PARENT MEETINGS

Parent meetings are a vital part of any sacrament preparation process. When deciding on the number of meetings, consider the many demands made upon parents today. A realistic number of parent meetings seem to be two or three two-hour sessions.

Carefully plan all meetings using effective adult catechetical experiences. Each meeting should include:

- History and theology of Confirmation;
- A discussion on how persons develop — morally, spiritually, psychologically;
- Small group reflection and faith-sharing;
- Overview of the preparation process and materials to be used;
- Ideas for home follow-up;
- Information on schedule of events for the entire process;
- Short prayer service.

Care should be taken that parents who previously have been through the program not be required to experience the same program. These parents could be used most effectively as discussion leaders and planners.

A Sample Parent Meeting:

Have the meeting in a setting which is conducive to adult education. The room should be large enough for the group, well-lighted and comfortable.

A Church usually does not get the same response or involvement as a parish hall. Many adults become passive in Church. A classroom has desks which are too small for most adults.

Schedule

7:00	Introductions and Purpose of Meeting
7:10	(1) What do you remember about your Confirmation? (2) What questions do you hope we answer tonight? (3) What do you want for your son/daughter because of Confirmation?
7:30	Prayer
7:35	History and Theology of Confirmation
7:50	Adolescents Today: Religious and Moral Development, Parent-Teen Relationships, etc.
8:20	Our Parish Confirmation Program within a Comprehensive Youth Ministry framework
8:30	Questions
8:45	Short Prayer Service

Be sure to give time for parents to ask questions, but stay with the schedule. Start and end on time. Don't try to do everything or teach everything about religion.

SPONSOR MEETINGS

Sponsor meetings are necessary so that the sponsor can become fully aware of their necessary commitment. The initial sponsor meeting could be a stand alone meeting as outlined here or a meeting that involves the candidates. If you do the sponsor/candidate meeting, you will need to divide the group for a portion of the meeting so that the section of the meeting on the meaning and role of the sponsor would be with them while the teens do something else*.

Using good adult catechetical principles, the meetings should include:

- Opening Prayer: (focused on the Holy Spirit's work in our lives)
- Small group faith sharing around each person's own confirmation experience and the experience they had with their sponsor

- History and theology of Confirmation

- The meaning and role of sponsor
 - Information on involvement of time for meetings, retreats, service projects, etc.

 - Suggestions for sponsor/candidate activities

 - Ideas for follow-up with candidate

 - risk management in the sponsor/confirmand relationship++

- Closing Prayer service: (Focused on the gifts of the Holy Spirit and could include a prayer asking the Holy Spirit to make us more aware of these gifts in our lives)

*If you do a combined meeting, you could bring the sponsors and the confirmands back together after the part of the meeting where they are separated (the meaning and the role of the sponsor) to talk with each other in pairs about how they will commit to meet together during the next 6 months leading up to the confirmation mass. When you conclude this part of the meeting before your closing prayer, have a few of the sponsor/confirmand pairs share their plan in brief (this will help some of the pairings that were drawing a blank or who were not very creative).

++ See the enclosed ministry volunteer application which should be filled out by each sponsor. The references they name must be checked with the enclosed form and kept in their file (or a sponsor file - everyone kept together). Should you encounter any questionable references when the reference checks are returned, you should speak to your pastor about them or call the personnel office at the Catholic Center.

PARENT/SPONSOR ACTIVITIES

It is good to provide activities for those parents and sponsors who are interested in carrying the preparation into the home and community. When giving suggestions, emphasize that the parents and sponsors not try to initiate every activity. Rather, encourage them to choose a few of the activities that best suit their situation. Some possible activities are as follows:

- Write out the baptismal promises as a family and sign these promises renewing the baptismal commitment. If baptismal candles are available, burn these during the renewal.

- Discuss the various parish organizations. Introduce the candidate to some of the parish leadership.

- Together pray the Creed — “We Believe” — which is part of the Sunday Eucharistic Liturgy. Take portions of the prayer and discuss your belief centered around these truths.

- Prepare a special place for the Bible in your home. Place a candle beside the holy book. As the family gathers, light the candle and read a portion telling the work of the power of God — the Holy Spirit. Take a different passage on various days and after a short discussion, lead into prayer by saying, “Let us Pray....” Prayers of praise or petition may follow. All might close by praying the Glory be to the Father

SUGGESTED READINGS

Luke 1:63-68 Zechariah is filled with the Holy Spirit

John 1:29-34 John the Baptist recognizes the Holy Spirit

Luke 4:14-19 Isaiah is sent by God’s power

Acts 2:1-4 Apostles receive the Spirit

Acts 8:14-17 Laying on of hands

Exodus 30:22-33 Directions for the preparation of chrism

Isaiah 11:1-2 Gifts of the Spirit

-On one evening light a special candle and after reading or reviewing the gifts of the Spirit, each member of the family tell about a time they believed that the Spirit of God was with them in a special way. Parents should be prepared to start and encourage the candidate by recounting ways

the family has found strength in God's power. (cf. Isaiah 11:1-2)

- As a family plan a special meal that as many members of the family can be present. Each person prepares one part of the celebration, e.g. set the table, do dishes, prepare salad, lead in prayer, light candle, etc. Luke 22:7-20 tells of the Last Supper and the special part each one played in its preparation. Read this together.

- Create a banner for your home reflecting some of the gifts of the Spirit each day and after discussion place a symbol or picture on the banner representing this gift. (cf. Isaiah 11:1-2)

- Discover the uses of oil (strengthening, soothing, healing, lighting, etc.) and the importance of perfume (precious, attracting, gladdening, welcoming, etc.) Mix some olive oil and perfume and discuss the anointing of persons of importance, e.g. kings, queens, priests, new Christians. Anoint one another with the sign of the cross and pray together the Glory Be to the Father or a blessing such as 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24.

- In preparation for a Sunday liturgy have the family gather with the Bible and candle placed in the center of the group. One member of the family should have prepared a Sunday reading. Talk about what you hear Jesus saying to you. Discuss how your family can live this message during the coming week.

- Prepare a blessing for the evening meal. While the parent says the blessing he/she should extend his/her hands. All should be encouraged to respond with "Amen, Alleluia," or some other appropriate response.

- Mom and dad might write a letter to the candidate expressing their love and concern and invite him/her to be a chosen member of the family community.

- Plan a special meal for your candidate. Allow him or her to choose a menu. Try to use the liturgical color of red in the menu and decorations.

- Sponsor and candidate could attend a weekday liturgy together.

- Sponsor and candidate could play some sport together, go fishing, have breakfast together before mass, etc. Anything that builds a relationship because that is what is most important to teenagers. A good relationship will enable faith-sharing and so forth to flourish.

- Sponsor/parents could take some time to share your faith beliefs with the candidate.

- Sponsors could write a note to candidate expressing his/her interest in the candidate's preparation.

- Parent/sponsor pick a certain day each week to especially pray for the candidate.

- Discuss a Christian's responsibility to support the Church. Share ways you respond to this responsibility. Discuss ways which the candidate can meet this responsibility.

REFLECTIONS BEFORE DEVELOPING A CONFIRMATION PREPARATION PROCESS

Before developing a plan for Confirmation preparation, parishes should ask some important questions:

1. What do we want to happen to our candidates as a result of their participation in this preparation process?
2. What are our goals? Are these realistic in the light of the age and abilities of the candidates?
3. Do our young people feel welcomed in the parish and at the Sunday Masses? How are their spiritual needs met in the parish and through the youth ministry program?
4. How is the faith of parents and adults fostered? How well are adults and parents in the parish able to share their faith with youth?
5. What are the specific strengths, needs, issues and problems which affect the religious formation of youth? Are the culture and values of youth considered?
6. What is the understanding of catechesis and youth ministry on the part of those persons responsible for this ministry? Is there a clear awareness of the comprehensive youth ministry approach which includes catechesis as well as 7 other components? Has the person(s) read the document from the American bishops: Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry?
7. How are the leadership skills of youth developed? Are there opportunities for them to perform meaningful roles within the parish?
8. Is our overall program for adolescents (grade 6-12) strong enough that our Confirmation catechesis can concentrate on actual spiritual formation for the sacrament?
9. How does the schedule fit with home, school and other parish activities?
10. Is there a leadership team already formed for Confirmation preparation? Is this team well-formed in the concepts of comprehensive youth ministry, adolescent catechetical principles and the sacraments of initiation?

PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPING ADOLESCENT CATECHESIS

The following principles from The Challenge of Adolescent Catechesis: Maturing in Faith should be considered when planning any youth catechesis, including Confirmation catechesis.

1. Adolescent catechesis is situated within the lifelong developmental process of faith growth and of ongoing catechesis. The entire catechetical effort is committed to the continuing faith growth of the individual within a comprehensive youth ministry process (grades 6-12).
2. Adolescent catechesis fosters Catholic Christian faith in three dimensions: trusting, believing, and doing.
3. Adolescent catechesis supports and encourages the role of the family and in particular the role of the parent(s) in the faith growth of the young person. There should also be opportunities for parent(s) to participate in developing and evaluating the adolescent catechesis curriculum and in programs to strengthen their parenting role.
4. Adolescent catechesis respects the unique cultural heritages of young people and builds upon the positive values found in these cultural heritages, while at the same time engaging young people in examining their culture in the light of faith and examining their faith in the light of culture.
5. Adolescent catechesis is integrated and developed within a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach to ministry with youth.
6. Adolescent catechesis responds to the developmental, social and cultural needs of adolescent. Related to that, the curriculum respects the changing developmental and social characteristics of the various stages of adolescence, providing a significantly different content and approach for younger and older adolescents.
7. Adolescent catechesis respects the variability in maturation rates and learning needs of adolescence.
8. Adolescent catechesis respects the expanding freedom and autonomy of adolescents.
9. Adolescent catechesis uses a variety of learning formats, environments, schedules and educational techniques.
10. Adolescent catechesis best responds to the learning needs of adolescents when it is focused on particular faith themes.

THE R.C.I.A.

It has been the trend in recent years to model Confirmation programs after the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. The RCIA offers us a great deal of insight on formational catechesis, the journey one takes to an active faith life and the value of sponsor and community to the catechumen. At this time, the average Confirmation candidate was baptized in infancy, reared in a Christian home nourished by the Eucharist and has been attending catechetical classes since early childhood. The RCIA begins with a non-believing adult moving through a series of phases celebrated by specific rites and culminates with the reception of the three initiation sacraments at one time.

To try to make that fit Confirmation candidates is like taking an overcoat and remaking it for a child. The overcoat loses its original form and still does not make a suitable garment for the child.

The RCIA is a treasure and is invaluable to sacramental catechesis. We have been reawakened to sponsors as spiritual friends, the importance of the community in sacramental support, the value of formation rather than purely information and the way the Spirit works in people's lives. Let us be aware of that in the preparation of our catechesis but let us not try to make Confirmation into RCIA. The two are not interchangeable.

RCIA adapted for children offers an opportunity for children who have not been baptized, who have been baptized in another faith tradition, or who are unchurched or uncatechized (no formal religious formation) and are 7 years of age or above to prepare for all of the sacraments of initiation at the same time. These adolescents should go through the RCIA adapted for children or the RCIA process - depending upon age and maturity (but with a group of adolescents their own age). If there is only one or two adolescents in this situation, it is not recommended that they be prepared with younger children or with older adults. Instead, they should be paired with the RCIA team catechist (whoever is identified to work with adolescents) during their inquiry period and paired with a peer sponsor who will journey with them throughout the catechumenate and become involved in the youth ministry program (which includes catechesis).

A CONFIRMATION RETREAT
(from the Diocese of Galveston/Houston)

FRIDAY

- 7:00 p.m. Bus leaves
- 8:00 Check-in, room assignments
- 8:30 Welcome, opening prayer, introductions, rules, warm-ups and group formations
- 9:30 What is this Confirmation retreat all about? Distribution of journals (encourage note taking and reflections). Explain “My Christ” partners and gifts — exchange names within group.
- 10:00 Snack and Break
- 10:30 BROKENNESS Talk
Film “Pardon and Peace,” small group discussions. Red envelopes with brokenness notes inside.
- Cross experience and prayer service — placing red envelopes on cross, scripture readings, music, quiet sign of peace
- 12:30 Staff meeting
- 1:00 Lights out!

SATURDAY

- 7:00 a.m. Staff wake-up
- 8:00 Morning Prayer, breakfast
- 9:00 Music and singing
JESUS AS HEALER Talk
Small group sharing
Letters to Jesus — giving Him our brokenness — personal reflection
Break when convenient
- 10:30 Cross experience and individual reconciliation — after receiving absolution, taking red envelope from cross and putting it in a white envelope with the letter to Jesus, then repinning to the cross
Group prayers and closing
- 12:00 p.m. Lunch

- 1:00 GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT Talk
Scripture study activity sheet, small group sharing and prayer
- 2:30 DISCIPLESHIP Talk
Small group sharing
Peter monologue
“Get Going” activity - scripture search through events in Peter’s life,
identifying with his feelings and reactions to Jesus’ call — done individually
and then shared in small groups
Private recollection on more personal questions related to scriptures
regarding Peter’s call can be begun if time permits
- 4:30 Break and Snack (free time/organized games)
- 6:30 Dinner
- 7:30 Commitment Talk
Small group activity and sharing
Slide show
- 9:00 COMMUNITY Talk
Small group activity and sharing
Slide show
- 10:30 Out pouring of the Holy Spirit/praying for individuals
- 12:00 a.m. Celebration!
- 1:30 Lights out!

SUNDAY

- 7:00 a.m. Staff wake-up
- 8:00 Morning prayer, breakfast, packing/cleaning out rooms
- 9:00 Music and Singing
TRANSFORMATION Talk
Cross experience — taking sealed envelopes from cross and replacing them
with daisies, offering burnt letters with incense

Small group sharing and prayer — exchanging “My Christ” gifts and giving
dove pins out
- 10:30 Set up for Eucharist/load equipment/clean up
- 11:30 Closing Liturgy

There is also a wonderful retreat for Confirmation preparation in the **Confirming Disciples** curriculum from the Center for Ministry Development, Naugatuck, Connecticut.

SERVICE

Service projects are increasingly becoming a part of Confirmation preparation because of the close relationship between faith and actions (service). The goal of service projects is to enable young people to experience being “Christ-like”. Jesus served those in need not to feel good about Himself but to make a connection with each person especially those with burdens. It is in this way that we understand that all of us are “one” in the “body of Christ”.

Service is also good for people. Search Institute out of Minneapolis surveying over one million teenagers has determined that young people who give in service to others at least one hour a week are less “at risk”. Even with this understanding of service however, rigid programs with large numbers of hour requirements should be examined to find if they are, in reality, achieving the goals named above. Service is a key component of a comprehensive youth ministry process and should be “available” to adolescents from 6th grade through high school graduation. It should not be the experience that young people only encounter service as a “hoop” for confirmation.

The following criteria may assist in planning meaningful service opportunities:

1. They should be a part of the already existing parish/youth ministry service activities.
2. They should be people-centered.
3. Long term, rather than one time activities are more effective. Recent research has shown that service alone does not impact adolescents. There must be an opportunity to for adolescents to talk about their service experience and process their experience if it is going to impact their personal lives, the decisions they will make, and their relationship with God.
4. The candidates should be able to use their talents and gifts in serving others. When we use the gifts and talents of adolescents in service to others we are affirming them as someone with something to give.
5. There should be an opportunity for candidates to assume some responsibility in the ministry and service of the parish.
6. The limitation of the candidates should be kept in mind. Their commitment to school, extra curricular activities, family and work must not be overlooked. Shortage of transportation should be considered. Service should not create hardships for people.

POST-CONFIRMATION

The Post-Confirmation period must be as well structured and planned as the Pre-Confirmation preparation period.

In order to help them deepen their participation in the life of the Church, the newly confirmed should be given representation on parish committees and significant roles during liturgical celebrations, as well as continuing catechesis. They should be invited into peer ministry with those younger than themselves and given the opportunity to help in retreat work and in the ministry of service.

Please see PACE, Volume 16, Approaches, for an article by Joseph Moore, "Post-Confirmation Syndrome and Peer Ministry" for excellent suggestions on developing peer ministry.

The following suggestions can help the newly confirmed become firmly rooted in the community.

I. **Debriefing Mystagogia**

In the original catechumenate structure a period of days immediately following the Easter Vigil Initiation was set aside for mystagogia. Its purpose was to help the newly initiated better understand all that had taken place and to explain to them all the symbolism employed in the rites. It was a kind of debriefing.

Such a follow-up is recommended for the newly confirmed. Its purpose is to provide the youth with an opportunity to reflect upon their experience in an informal though prayerful manner. It should be a time to reinforce the idea that their life in Eucharistic community is in a real sense just beginning.

A date(s) for such a gathering should be established well in advance so youth recognize the meeting as an integral part of the Confirmation program and not just an optional event.

The sessions could also include some gesture of appreciation to sponsors, for example, a pot-luck supper in their honor.

II. **Parish Outreach to Newly Confirmed**

Since Confirmation reflects the final step of initiation as full members of the adult faith community, this should be regarded as more than symbolic. The parish membership must be encouraged to reach out to join their fellowship and service. Therefore:

- A. This fact should be explained annually at some meeting of each parish organization and ministry group.
- B. Each organization should be encouraged to take steps toward explaining the nature and purpose of the organization to the youth.

Each youth should receive a personal invitation to join or otherwise participate in the group's activities or ministries.

- C. Newly confirmed youth should automatically be enrolled on all the mailing and phone lists used by the parish in communicating to the adult membership.
- D. Though still living with parents, newly confirmed youth should be enrolled as

individuals or “units” in terms of the envelope or tithing system used in the parish. This should be done thoughtfully and not without a real welcome to full membership in the parish community. Adolescents may also need some education on stewardship and particularly on the concept of tithing since they have never done this before and a tool to help them discern what they can and should give to the church financially. Stewardship includes time, talent and treasure and therefore it would be in poor taste to ask young people to give money to the church and not inquire about their time and talent.

- E. Newly confirmed should be informed of all the elected positions open within the parish’s system of administration and told of their eligibility for such positions.
- F. Whenever volunteers are sought, the newly confirmed should automatically be included with other adults in such invitations.
- G. The parish’s social events (dances, bazaars, parties, etc.) should be open to the newly confirmed and they should be invited to attend and to work on committees which put on these events.

In short, it should be visibly demonstrated to the newly confirmed that they are regarded and welcomed as adult members within the parish’s community and its life. This demands that the community reach out in **personal** ways to them.

III. **Celebration of Welcome in the Eucharistic Community After Confirmation**

EUCHARISTIC RECEPTION

Because Confirmation often takes place at a special liturgy, another occasion may be needed to celebrate the newly confirmed’s full member with the entire community.

A special day and liturgy (Sunday or Feast) should be chosen and the newly confirmed, sponsor, and parents should be invited to come to this particular parish liturgy.

- A. The newly confirmed take all liturgical roles possible.
- B. Parish Council gives a gift or certificate to the newly confirmed.
- C. Communion under both species for all.
- D. Meal or reception afterwards.

IV. **Post-Confirmation**

Confirmation should open the door to greater participation in the life of the Church. Parishes should continue to offer activities and the opportunities for the newly confirmed to continue to learn and share more about the Catholic faith. The Confirmation preparation program should include this focus on the future and a well-planned youth ministry program following Confirmation is essential.

Please contact the Diocesan Office of Youth Ministry (817/560-3300) for suggestions on comprehensive youth ministry.

CONFIRMATION CATECHESIS FOR THE DISABLED

Providing religious education for a special needs individual is not only our privilege, but also a duty. As a parish family we can expect that some 12.5% of our members have some disabling condition. If we truly recognize our equality before God in both our brokenness and giftedness, then we will wish to ensure that the diversity present in Christ's body is accommodated. To provide access to programs of religious education and sacramental celebrations may simply require facility accessibility. This may include designated parking, ramped entrances, restroom access, and doors wide enough to allow wheelchair access. The class and teacher may need to know any limitations or special needs the physically disabled student has for full class participation. Other disabling conditions may require individualized or different modes of instruction. This is a recognition of the infinitely different ways we encounter God. An intellectual approach may not be possible for teaching concepts of our faith to the mentally retarded person. An experience of God's love, welcome and presence through the relationships initiated by catechesis, pastoral staff and the parish family may be the most appropriate learning method of for this student.

The parent(s) can be the primary resource for determining the best methods of communication with the child and how to best teach their child and an interview with parents will reveal previous religious education and sacramental preparation. The students should not be segregated unnecessarily from their peers, although special instruction can be arranged — class projects, parties, drama productions and field trips could be open for participation.

The Confirmation team should work with the family to determine when and how the special needs person will be able to interface with the preparation process. For example, there may be some sessions at the church in small groups and a retreat program at a site nearby with access ramps, etc so that the he/she will be able to participate. There may be some preparation moments that won't be accessible such as a neighborhood door to door scavenger hunt. The Confirmation team should make every effort to fully involve special needs persons in the preparation process but allow them to finish the process even if they are not able to participate in some experiences.

The challenges of ensuring access and participation for a special needs person will serve to broaden our encounter with the Lord in all His people. Confirmation preparation for the disabled should, according to their individual abilities, lead them to:

- An awareness of the responsibilities Confirmation brings — living the Christian life day by day
- An understanding of the Holy Spirit in our lives
- An awakening of the spiritual life of prayer and other external expressions of faith
- An explanation of the meaning of the symbols used within the celebration of Confirmation

Part of the preparation should include a dramatization of the ceremony so that the disabled candidate will not be frightened by the experience. It should be an occasion of joy and celebration, not anxiety and fear.

For resources to be used with the disabled, please see the RESOURCE section.

BAPTIZED CATHOLICS WHO SEEK CONFIRMATION AS ADULTS

Some adult Catholics, for various reasons, were not confirmed in their youth. When adults come forward for Confirmation, it is often a result of change in their lives. The parish is challenged to structure flexible programs to meet the diversity of needs. Even active Catholics need time and guidance to become well prepared in order to experience the sacrament to the fullest.

The qualifications of the adult candidate should be the same as those described in Section III on Policies.

Adults should be grouped with other adults and not be placed in the catechetical program for young persons.

“Catechesis for adults respects and makes use of their experiences, their culture, racial and ethnic heritages, their personal skills, and the other resources they bring to catechetical programs: whenever possible, adults should teach and learn from one another” (National Catechetical Directory #185). In Confirmation catechesis, adults should experience Christian fellowship in the community, a nurturing of their spiritual life of prayer, a heightened experience of worship, an opportunity for community service and a deepening of faith through the study of the topics described in Section II, Key Catechetical elements of preparation. Some candidates may need an extensive study of Catholic teachings. Those who are unchurched or uncatechized even if they have been baptized should participate in the parish Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

Adults can participate in planning the celebration. Careful study of the options available for parish adult Confirmation celebrations can be offered. Since there are several liturgical opportunities for adults to be confirmed, liturgy teams, catechists and candidates should plan or the best possible celebration.

Newly confirmed adults should be invited to continue their growth by becoming involved in parish activities to their liking. Such things as adult education classes, Renew, being a lector, a Eucharistic minister, volunteering in the religious education program, working in s soup kitchen, etc., are some activities to which they can be invited.

When planning catechesis for adults, the following documents should be studied:

- Rite of Reception of Baptized Christians into Full Communion with the Catholic Church. Bishops Committee on Liturgy, NCCD. Washington, D. C., 1973.
- Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, January, 1972.
- Sharing the Light of Faith, the National Catechetical Directory. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1979.
- The General Directory for Catechesis, United States Catholic Conference, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1997.

Argus Communications publishes a text for adults entitled Kingdom Come by George McCowley, S.J.

SUGGESTED BOOKS FOR CONFIRMATION TEAMS

- Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, Department of Education, 1997.
- Austin, Gerard, O.P. *Anointing With the Spirit*. New York, NY: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1985.
- Bausch, William. *A New Look at the Sacraments*. Twenty-Third Publications, Mystic Connecticut, revised 1998.
- Bausch, William. *The Role of the Sacraments in the Formation of Faith*. Washington, D.C.: National Conference of Diocesan Directors of Religious Education, 1977.
- Becoming a Catholic Christian*, A Symposium on Christian Initiation. New York, NY: William H. Sadlier, 1978.
- The Challenge of Adolescent Catechesis: Maturing in Faith*. Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, The National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, 1986.
- The Challenge of Catholic Youth Evangelization: Called to be Witnesses and Storytellers*, The National Federation of Catholic Youth Ministry, Washington, DC, 1993.
- From Age to Age: The Challenge of Worship with Adolescents*, St. Mary's Press, Winona MN, 1997.
- Cooke, Bernard. *Sacraments and Sacramentality*. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1983.
- Durken, Daniel, O.S.B. *Confirmation, Official Rite and Commentary*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1983.
- Fitzgerald, Timothy. *Confirmation, a Parish Celebration*. Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 1983.
- Guzie, Tad. *Sacramental Basics*. New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1981.
- Kavanaugh, Aidan. *The Shape of Baptism: The Rite of Christian Initiation*, Studies in the Reformed Rites of the Catholic Church, Vol. 1. New York, NY: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1978.
- Made Not Born*, New Perspectives on Christian Initiation and the Catechumenate. University of Notre Dame: Murphy Center for Liturgical Research, 1976.
- Marsh, Thomas. *Gift of Community, Baptism and Confirmation*. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1984.
- Martos, Joseph. *Doors to the Sacred, A Historical Introduction to Sacraments in the Catholic*

Church. Garden City, NY: Image Books, A Division of Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1984.

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, 1974.

Rite of Confirmation. Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, 1971.

The Rites of the Catholic Church, as Revised by Decree of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and published by Authority of Pope Paul VI. New York, NY: Pueblo Publishing Co., 1976, 1983.

Roberto, John. *Confirmation in the American Catholic Church.* Washington, D.C.: National Conference of Diocesan Directors of Religious Education, 1978.

Searle, Mark. *Christening, the Making of Christians.* Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1980.

Segundo, Juan Luis. *The Sacraments Today.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1974.

General Catechetical Directory, Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, Department of Education, 1998

Sharing the Light of Faith, The National Catechetical Directory for Catholics of the United States. Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, Department of Education, 1979.

To Teach as Jesus Did. Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1973.

CONFIRMATION PROGRAMS FOR PERSONS REQUIRING SPECIAL CURRICULUM

Confirmation Lessons for Exceptional Children. Sr. M. Helene, M.H.S.H. Archdiocese of Detroit; 305 Michigan Avenue; Detroit, Michigan 48226-2614.

Journey with Jesus. Sr. M Sheila Haskett, O.S.F. and Ph. D.. Special Religious Education Center; Cardinal Stritch College Bookstore; 6801 N. Yates Road; Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53207.

R.E.A.C.H., Confirmation. Sr, Rosemary Mauler, O.P. 1928 Atwood; Topeka, Kansas 66604.