

## Rite of Confirmation Introduction

### I. DIGNITY OF CONFIRMATION

1. Those who have been baptized continue on the path of Christian initiation through the sacrament of confirmation. In this sacrament they receive the Holy Spirit whom the Lord sent upon the apostles on Pentecost.
2. This giving of the Holy Spirit conforms believers more fully to Christ and strengthens them so that they may bear witness to Christ for the building up of his Body in faith and love. They are so marked with the character or seal of the Lord that the sacrament of confirmation cannot be repeated.

### II. OFFICES AND MINISTRIES IN THE CELEBRATION OF CONFIRMATION

3. One of the highest responsibilities of the people of God is to prepare the baptized for confirmation. Pastors have the special responsibility to see that all the baptized reach the completion of Christian initiation and therefore that they are carefully prepared for confirmation.

Adult catechumens who are to be confirmed immediately after baptism have the help of the Christian community and, in particular, the formation that is given to them during the catechumenate. Catechists, sponsors, and members of the local Church participate in the catechumenate by means of catechesis and community celebrations of the rites of initiation. For those who were baptized in infancy and are confirmed only as adults the plan for the catechumenate is used with appropriate adaptations.

The initiation of children into the sacramental life is ordinarily the responsibility and concern of Christian parents. They are to form and gradually increase a spirit of faith in the children and, at times with the help of catechism classes, prepare them for the fruitful reception of the sacraments of confirmation and the eucharist. The role of the parents is also expressed by their active participation in the celebration of the sacraments.

4. Pains should be taken to give the liturgical service the festive and solemn character that its significance for the local Church requires. This will be achieved above all if the candidates are gathered together for a community celebration of the rite. All the people of God, represented by the families and friends of the candidates and by members of the local community, will be invited to take part in such a celebration and will endeavor to express their faith by means of the effects the Holy Spirit has produced in them.
5. As a rule there should be a sponsor for each of those to be confirmed. These sponsors bring the candidates to receive the sacrament, present them to the minister for the anointing, and will later help them to fulfill their baptismal promises faithfully under the influence of the Holy Spirit whom they have received.

In view of contemporary pastoral circumstances, it is desirable that the godparent at baptism, if available, also be the sponsor at confirmation. This change expresses more clearly the link

between baptism and confirmation and also makes the function and responsibility of the sponsor more effective.

Nonetheless the option of choosing a special sponsor for confirmation is not excluded. Even the parents themselves may present their children for confirmation. It is for the local Ordinary to determine diocesan practice in the light of local conditions and circumstances.

6. Pastors will see that the sponsors, chosen by the candidates or their families, are spiritually fit to take on this responsibility and have these qualities:

- a. sufficient maturity to fulfill their function;
- b. membership in the Catholic Church and their own reception of the Christian initiation through baptism, confirmation, and eucharist;
- c. freedom from any impediment of law to their fulfilling the office of sponsor.

7. The ordinary minister of confirmation is the bishop. Normally a bishop administers the sacrament so that there will be a clearer reference to the first pouring forth of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost: after the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit, they themselves gave the Spirit to the faithful through the laying on of hands. Thus the reception of the Spirit through the ministry of the bishop shows the close bond that joins the confirmed to the Church and the mandate received from Christ to bear witness to him before all.

The law gives the faculty to confirm to the following besides the bishop:

- a. territorial prelates and territorial abbots, vicars and prefects apostolic, apostolic administrators and diocesan administrators, within the limits of their territory and while they hold office;
- b. in consideration of the person to be confirmed, priests who, in virtue of an office or the mandate of the diocesan bishop, baptize a person who is no longer an infant or receive a person who is already baptized into full communion of the Catholic Church;
- c. in consideration of those who are in danger of death, a pastor or in fact any priest.

8. The diocesan bishop is to administer confirmation himself or to ensure that it is administered by another bishop. But if necessity requires, he may grant one or several, determinate priests the faculty to administer this sacrament.

For a serious reason, as sometimes is present because of the large number of those to be confirmed, the bishop and also a priest who, in virtue of the law or a particular concession by competent authority, has the faculty to confirm, may in individual cases associate priests with himself so that they may administer the sacrament.

It is preferable that the priests who are so invited:

- a. either have a particular function or office in the diocese, being, namely, either vicars general, episcopal vicars, or district or regional vicars;
- b. or be the pastors of the places where confirmation is conferred, pastors of the places where the candidates belong, or priests who have had a special part in the catechetical preparation of the candidates.

### III. CELECRATION OF THE SACRAMENT

9. The sacrament of confirmation is conferred through the anointing with chrism on the forehead, which is done by the laying on the hand, and through the words: **BE SEALED WITH THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

The laying of hands on the candidates with the prayer, *All-powerful God*, does not pertain to the valid giving of the sacrament. But it is still to be regarded as very important: it contributes to the complete perfection of the rite and to a more thorough understanding of the sacrament.

The priests who may at times be associated with the principal minister in conferring the sacrament join him in the laying of hands on all the candidates, but say nothing.

The whole rite presents a twofold symbolism. The laying of hands on the candidates by the bishop and the concelebrating priests represents the biblical gesture by which the gift of the Holy Spirit is invoked and in a manner well suited to the understanding of the Christian people. The anointing with chrism and the accompanying words express clearly the effect of the giving of the Holy Spirit. Signed with the perfumed oil, the baptized receive the indelible character, the seal of the Lord, together with the gift of the Spirit that conforms them more closely to Christ and gives them the grace of spreading “the sweet odor of Christ.”

10. The chrism is consecrated by the bishop in the Mass that is celebrated as a rule on Holy Thursday for this purpose.

11. Adult catechumens and children who are baptized at an age when they are old enough for catechesis should ordinarily be admitted to confirmation and the eucharist at the same time as they receive baptism. If this is impossible, they should receive confirmation at another community celebration. Similarly, adults who were baptized in infancy should, after suitable preparation, receive confirmation and the eucharist at a community celebration.

With regard to children, in the Latin Church the administration of confirmation is generally delayed until about the seventh year. For pastoral reasons, however, especially to implant deeply in the lives of the faithful complete obedience to Christ the Lord and a firm witnessing to him, the conferences of bishops may set an age that seems more suitable. This means that the sacrament is given, after the formation proper to it, when the recipients are more mature.

In this case every necessary precaution is to be taken to ensure that in the event of danger of death or serious problems of another kind children receive confirmation in good time, so that they are not left without the benefit of this sacrament.

12. Persons who are to receive confirmation must have already received baptism. Moreover, those possessing the use of reason must be in the state of grace, properly instructed, and capable of renewing the baptismal promises.

The conference of bishops has responsibility for determining more precisely the catechetical resources for the preparation of candidates for confirmation, especially children.

In the case of adults, those principles are to be followed, with the required adaptations, that apply in the individual dioceses to admitting catechumens to baptism and eucharist. Measures are to be taken especially for catechesis preceding confirmation and for the association of the candidates with the Christian community and with individual Christians. Such association is to be of a kind that is effective and sufficient as a practical help for the candidates to achieve formation toward both bearing witness by Christian living and carrying on the apostolate. It should also assist the candidates to have a genuine desire to share in the eucharist (see *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, Introduction no. 19).

Sometimes the preparation of baptized adults for confirmation coincides with preparation for marriage. In such cases, if it is foreseen that the conditions for a fruitful reception of confirmation cannot be satisfied, the local Ordinary will judge whether it is better to defer confirmation until after the marriage.

If one who has the use of reason is confirmed in danger of death, there should, as far as possible, be some spiritual preparation beforehand, suited to the individual situation.

13. Confirmation takes place as a rule within Mass in order that the fundamental connection of this sacrament with all of Christian initiation may stand out in clearer light. Christian initiation reaches its culmination in the communion of the body and blood of Christ. The newly confirmed therefore participate in the eucharist, which completes their Christian initiation.

If the candidates for confirmation are children who have not received the eucharist and are not being admitted to first communion at this liturgical celebration or if there are other special circumstances, confirmation should be celebrated outside Mass. When this occurs, there is first to be a celebration of the word of God.

When confirmation is given during Mass, it is fitting that the minister of confirmation celebrate the Mass or, better, concelebrate it, especially with those priests who may be joining him in administering the sacrament.

If the Mass is celebrated by someone else, it is proper that the bishop preside over the liturgy of the word, doing all that the celebrant normally does, and that he give the blessing at the end of Mass.

Great emphasis should be placed on the celebration of the word of God that introduces the rite of confirmation. It is from the hearing of the word of God that the many-sided work of the Holy Spirit flows out upon the Church and upon each one of the baptized and confirmed. Through this hearing of his word God's will is made known in the life of Christians.

Great importance is likewise to be attached to the saying of the Lord's Prayer. Those to be confirmed will recite it together with the congregation – either during Mass before communion or outside Mass before the blessing – because it is the Spirit who prays in us and in the Spirit the Christian says, "Abba, Father."

14. The names of those confirmed, as well as the names of the minister, parents, and sponsors, and a notation of the place and date of the confirmation conferred, are to be entered into the registry of confirmations of the diocesan curia, or, where the conference of bishops or the diocesan bishop has so ordered, in a book to be kept in the parish archives. The pastor must inform the pastor of the recipient's place of baptism that confirmation has been conferred, so that this may be recorded in the baptismal register, according to the requirements of the law.

15. If the pastor of the place was not present, the minister should promptly inform him of the confirmation, either personally or through a representative.

#### IV. ADAPTATIONS PERMITTED IN THE RITE OF CONFIRMATION

16. By virtue of the Constitution of the Liturgy (art. 63 b), conferences of bishops have the right to prepare in particular rituals a section bearing the same title as the present title IV on confirmation in the Roman Pontifical. This is to be adapted to the needs of the individual parts of the world and it is to be used once the *acta* of the conference have been reviewed by the Apostolic See.<sup>1</sup>

17. The conference of bishops will consider whether, in view of local circumstances and the culture and traditions of the people, it is opportune:

- a. to make suitable adaptations of the formularies for the renewal of baptismal promises and professions, either following the text in the rite of baptism or accommodating these formularies so that they are more in accord with the circumstances of the candidates for confirmation;
- b. to introduce a different manner for the minister to give the sign of peace after the anointing, either to each individual or to all the newly confirmed together.

18. The minister of confirmation may introduce some explanations into the rite in individual cases in view of the capacity of the candidates for confirmation. He may also make appropriate accommodations in the existing texts, for example, by expressing these in a kind of dialogue, especially these in a kind of dialogue, especially with children.

When confirmation is given by a minister who is not a bishop, whether by concession of the general law or by special indult of the Apostolic See, it is fitting for him to mention in the homily

that the bishop is the original minister of the sacrament and to explain the reason why priests receive the faculty to confirm to confirm from the law or by an indult of the Apostolic See.

## V. PREPARATIONS

19. The following should be prepared for the administration of confirmation:

- a. when confirmation is given within Mass, the vestments prescribed for the celebration of Mass both for the bishop and for any assisting priests who concelebrate with him. If the Mass is celebrated by someone else, the minister of confirmation as well as any priests joining him in administering the sacrament should take part in the Mass wearing the vestments prescribed for administering confirmation: alb, stole, and, for the minister, the cope; these also are the vestments worn when confirmation is given outside of Mass;
- b. chairs for the bishop and the priests assisting him;
- c. vessel (or vessels) for the chrism;
- d. Roman Pontifical or Roman Ritual;
- e. when confirmation is given within Mass, the requisites for celebration of Mass and for communion under both kinds, if it is to be given;
- f. the requisites for the washing of hands after the anointing of those to be confirmed.

<sup>1</sup>See *Rite of Baptism for Children*, General Introduction to Christian Initiation nos. 30-33.