

Summary of the 2009 Confirmation Policy Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph

Theological Principle: The meaning of Confirmation is sometimes misunderstood by Catholics. It is common to hear that Confirmation is one's acceptance into the Catholic Church, that it is one's personal commitment to the Church, or that it is one's admission to adulthood in the Church. None of these opinions is defensible from the Church's liturgical, canonical or catechetical documents.

Instead, the Church has constantly affirmed that Confirmation is the gift of the Holy Spirit, given for the sake of helping a Christian bear witness to the faith. It is more about God's gift than about a person's commitment. It has more to do with the grace that follows the reception of the sacrament than about the preparation that precedes it.

Canonical Requirements: "Outside the danger of death, to be licitly confirmed it is required, if the person has the use of reason, that one be suitably instructed, properly disposed and able to renew one's baptismal promises." (Canon 889/2)

Suitably Instructed:

- ✓ Candidates are expected to be regular/weekly participants in Sunday Mass and other liturgical prayer of the parish, including the sacrament of Reconciliation.
- ✓ They should have a history of active participation in parish education programs since childhood.
- ✓ They should be participants in the parish youth ministry activities.
- ✓ They should take part in a Confirmation preparation process that involves learning about the Holy Spirit, Scripture, the Liturgy of Confirmation, and the Baptismal Promises.
- ✓ The parish Confirmation preparation lessons should be drawn from texts approved by the diocese for this purpose.
- ✓ Regular meetings between the candidate and sponsor should be held so that sponsors and candidate can share faith and life experiences.

Properly Disposed:

- ✓ Candidates should lead a life of prayer and service both individually and in their families and parishes.
- ✓ They should desire in their hearts to receive the Holy Spirit through the sacrament and to use the gifts for the good of the Church.
- ✓ They should celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation.
- ✓ They should participate in a retreat experience.

Able to renew their baptismal promises:

- ✓ Candidate should spend time discussing and meditating of each affirmation of the Baptismal promises as a means of strengthening Christian identity.
- ✓ They should be able to loudly affirm their faith in the public ritual.

Age of Confirmation: The canonical norm for the reception of Confirmation is the age of reason, or about the year of seven. However, Canon Law clearly allows bishops to determine another age. In our diocese:

- Confirmation may normally be conferred at any point in either 9th or 10th grade.
- Parish should not defer Confirmation to any time after the spring of the sophomore year.
- Confirmation preparation should be seen as a component of a comprehensive youth ministry in grades 9-12.

Length of Preparation: So that Confirmation does not become the predominant method of providing catechesis to teens and to encourage comprehensive youth ministry, the length of preparation should normally be limited to 8 - 10 sessions held within a span of 4 -6 months, or one semester.

It will be up to parishes to decide when to begin the program between 9th and 10th grade and how many sessions will take place during that time. Parishes who opt for a shorter program may offer it more than once if desired to optimize recipients of the sacrament, but all parishes will be limited to one ceremony per year.

Comprehensive Youth Ministry:

Confirmation is to be situated and integrated into a comprehensive youth ministry formation program encompassing grades 9 - 12. All parishes should have as a goal to provide high school youth ministry programming that involves catechetical, social, prayerful, service-oriented activities that are offered to all young people. It is expected that all confirmation candidates, as well as those already confirmed, be active participants in these youth ministry offerings.

It is up the parish to ensure that attractive, appropriate, and meaningful activities are provided.