Why have a Confirmation Process?

Various concerns have been brought to our attention in the Faith Formation Office that led to the development of a Confirmation Process.

The first concern is the need to address adolescent catechesis. Developmentally, adolescents are more inclined to understand and grapple with the various social and moral challenges that they face in our society. Academically, adolescents are better equipped to grasp a fuller understanding of the faith and to express it by their choices and actions. Adolescents today are searching for the truth that will give their life meaning and depth. The answer is for them to be rooted in a relationship with Jesus and the Church and to find themselves fully alive in the Christian Mystery.

The second concern that the Bishop and priests have, is the task of assuring that young people receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation have a clear understanding of themselves as Catholics and a clear understanding of the Church.

The third concern is the notion of “shopping around.” Parents inquire regarding requirements for the Confirmation Process, and then proceed to “shop around” for alternatives that may be less demanding of time and commitment, even if that means they switch to another parish.

Our job is to prepare disciples for the present and the future. This is clear from Church Documents, the NDC, and most importantly from the Gospel.

Church Documents support having well formed young people as they approach the Sacrament of Confirmation.

John Paul II’s Apostolic Letter on the occasion of the new millennium states: “We shall not be saved by a formula, but by a Person, and the assurance which he gives us: I am with you! It is not therefore a matter of inventing a “new Program.” The program already exists: it is the plan found in the Gospel and the living Tradition, it is the same as ever.” (#29 Novo Millennio Ineunte)

The National Directory for Catechesis states the following regarding Catechesis for Confirmation/Chrismation:

The revised Rite of Confirmation (Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, Rite of Confirmation 1971) indicates that Episcopal conferences may designate the appropriate age for Confirmation. In the United States the age of Confirmation in the Latin Church for children and young people varies widely from diocese to diocese; it can be designated between the age of discretion through around sixteen years. Since the sacramental practice for Confirmation in the United States is so diverse, a single catechesis cannot be prescribed for Confirmation. However, some general guidelines can be articulated.
Catechesis for adults preparing for Confirmation follows the pattern recommended in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. Dioceses and parishes should present catechesis for the Sacrament of Confirmation that

- 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 bear witness to the Christian faith in words and deeds.
- Teaches about the Holy Spirit, his gifts and his fruits.
- Is developmentally appropriate and includes retreat experiences.
- Include instruction on the Rite 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).

*(NDC # 36 Catechesis For the Particular Sacraments; #2 Catechesis for Confirmation / Chrismation)*

In *Renewing the Vision of Youth Ministry* it states: “three interdependent and equally important goals guide the Church’s ministry with adolescents. These goals state what it means for the Catholic community to respond to the needs of young people and to involve young people in sharing their unique gifts with the larger community. They express the Church’s focus for ministry with adolescents, while encouraging local creativity in developing the programs, activities, and strategies to reach these goals.

**Goal 1:** To empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today.
**Goal 2:** To draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and the work of the Catholic faith community.
**Goal 3:** To foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person.

Research and pastoral experiences have demonstrated that there are particular assets – knowledge, values, skills, and commitments – that can make a significant difference in promoting the faith development of young and older adolescents. These assets focus our ministry by naming what the Church seeks to achieve in the lives of young people. They provide specific directions for effective pastoral practice that is guided by the three goals.

The Church’s ministry with adolescents seeks to:

- Guide young people in the call to holiness by developing a personal relationship with Jesus Christ by meeting him in the Scriptures, in the life and teachings of the Catholic Church, and in their own prayer lives.
Empower young people with the knowledge and skills for active participation in the life and ministries of the Church, including a comprehensive and substantive catechesis based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church;

Nurture in young people positive, Catholic values of love, honesty, courage, peace and nonviolence, fidelity, chastity, generosity, tolerance, respect for life from conception to natural death, care and compassion, service to those in need, equality, social justice, integrity, responsibility, and community;

Help young people apply their Catholic faith to daily life experiences, nurture in young people a lifelong commitment to the Catholic faith, guiding them in developing a personal faith and skills for continuing their growth as Catholics;

Empower young people to live the moral and theological virtues and apply these virtues in making moral decisions;

Develop the biblical and doctrinal literacy of young people and a deeper appreciation for the importance of the Scriptures and the teachings of the Church in the Christian life;

Foster development of a personal spirituality and prayer life in young people;

Nurture in young people an understanding of and active participation in the sacramental life of the Church, especially the Eucharist;

Help young people recognize that the Catholic faith calls them to work for justice and to defend human dignity;

Empower young people to serve those in need, to develop skills that foster social changes to secure justice and equality for every human being; and to live a life of Christian service modeled on Jesus’ life;

Empower young people to become healers and reconcilers when conflicts arise, to pursue peace, and to become peaceful persons;

Promote an understanding of and respect for people who are different from the young people – different cultures, different languages, different faiths, different ages - and develop the attitudes and skills for overcoming racial and ethnic prejudices as individuals and members of society;

Develop young people’s critical thinking skills that empower them to analyze contemporary life and culture in light of the Good News of Jesus Christ and the teachings of the Church;

Promote Catholic sexual values and attitudes and the importance of valuing chastity and sexual restraint;

Promote positive self-image in young people, including an appreciation of one’s ethnic culture, a sense of self-esteem, a sense of purpose in life, a positive view of one’s personal future, and a humble acceptance of one’s self as lovable and loved by God and others;

Develop the life skills of adolescents including the skills for entering into and maintaining meaningful friendships; planning and decision-making skills, life-planning skills, appreciation and understanding of a variety of cultures, and peaceful conflict resolution skills;

Help young people recognize the movement of the Holy Spirit in their lives and discern their particular Christian vocation in the world – in the workplace, in marriage or single life; in the priesthood or consecrated life, or in the permanent deaconate;

Cultivate the gifts and talents of young people, and empower them to utilize these gifts and talents in leadership and ministry in the Church and community including peer ministry and intergenerational skills.”

(Renewing the Vision of Youth Ministry, 1997: p. 15-18)
Basics for Entry into the Confirmation Process

Individual parishes should develop a procedure to discern if a young person is ready to enter the two-year process of Confirmation Preparation. The following should be considered:

- Has the child attended Religious Formation classes during the time between First Communion and entry into the Confirmation Process?
- If the answer is no, some type of remediation should be offered by the parish.
- Parishes should develop “entry” interviews just previous to a child entering the Confirmation Program.

Previous to admittance into the Confirmation Process a child should know basics of the Catholic faith:

- How to make the sign of the cross
- The Our Father
- The Hail Mary
- The Act of Contrition
- What does it mean to “pray”? 
- The Seven Sacraments
- Who is Jesus?
- What do Catholics believe regarding Eucharist?
- Why do we believe as Catholics, that weekly Mass attendance is important?

A young person entering the Confirmation Process should be able to express what it means “to pray” and should have the ability to begin discussing the questions.

Individual parishes should raise social concerns depending upon their own particular projects in this area. Since the Confirmation Project calls for an interview, it would be wise to familiarize young people with an “interview” at the start of the process.

Assure the parents about this initial interview, noting that their children are merely being asked very similar topics about the faith that they learned at First Communion.
In response to the needs put forth from the Bishop, the priests, the parishes, and the various Church Documents that encourage us to address adolescent catechesis, the Faith Formation Office is responding by offering a:

“Model Confirmation Process”

The Confirmation Process contains the following three-fold approach: a catechetical component, prayer/liturgical experiences and a service/stewardship component.

- Rituals and Liturgical Experiences that will ground faith formation for Confirmation in the home Parish.
  1. At the beginning of the Confirmation Process a family/parish based ritual where the parents will present the young person to enter into the Confirmation Process will take place.
     (If a young person is enrolled in Catholic school, they will receive academic training in the school, but return to the home Parish for Faith Formation).
  2. The young person will begin a course of academic study, spiritual formation, and moral formation that is proper to a Catholic adolescent. Over the course of two full calendar years, various sacramental and liturgical experiences will be part of the overall Confirmation Process.
  3. Parent involvement; sponsor involvement; small and large group learning; liturgical experiences; and retreats will be part of the process

- An Assessment Instrument to be used previous to entering the two-year process for Confirmation. This instrument will be used prior to the young person entering the Confirmation Process. (This may be viewed as the first step, an example of this is in this packet entitled: Basics for Entry into the Confirmation Process).

Typically, the first assessment prior to entering the Confirmation process is seeking information regarding the young persons understanding of the basics of the faith; Mass attendance; their understanding of social concerns. These areas as well as their developing conscience regarding life issues; healthy friendships; and their developing relationship with Jesus through the Church will grow and develop through a well-rounded Confirmation Process over the next two years.

[Parish staff should plan on attending the Confirmation Interview Training on May 14, 2008 at the Seminary of the Immaculate Conception. (Please see the enclosed flyer). This training will give further details regarding implementing the Confirmation Interview within the parish.]
**Master Catechist**

Sessions of particularly challenging topics may be accomplished by use of a “Master Catechist.”

With this model of a “Master Catechist” one presentation could be presented to a large audience of young people. After the presentation, the young people meet with their regular Catechist for small group discussion and journaling regarding the particular topic.

Integral to this “Master Catechist” Model is that prayer be part of the presentation. The Master Catechist has to creatively engage the young people in the topic presented. The Master Catechist must be able to present the teaching of the Catholic Church in an accurate and attractive manner.

You are invited to select qualified individuals from your parish to be trained and designated as “Master Catechists.”

**Who can be trained as a Master Catechist?**

A candidate for the role of Master Catechist is an individual who has met the following criteria:

- Holds an MA in Catholic Theology
- Or
- Has graduated from PFI
- Or
- Holds a Basic and Advanced Certificate in Religious Studies
- And
- Is active in parish life and shows a vibrant and living faith
- Attends the training offered by the Diocese for Master Catechists.

**When will Master Catechists be trained?**

The training of Master Catechists will be on-going. Dates, times and locations will be announced through the Professional Page of the Office of Faith Formation website. The Diocese will conduct the training during three 2-hour sessions or one 6-hour session. These sessions will be held during the evening or on Saturdays to accommodate as many individuals as possible.

**What topics will be covered by Master Catechists?**

Social Justice; Christology; Catholic Morality (specifically sexuality, chastity, medical ethics, life issues). Additional topics will be offered as needs arise.

**Does a Master Catechist have to be trained for all topics?**

No, various individuals can and should attend the trainings that will be available. It is a suggestion that more than one individual from each parish attend the training since it is wise to have more than one person trained as a Master Catechist per topic.
**Parent Involvement During the Confirmation Process**

Parent involvement during the Confirmation Process confirms the belief that parents are the first to form their children in the faith. It further develops the experience of the home as Domestic Church in all its richness, as a family comes together to further their faith development.

It is important to affirm the faith development of families. One way to affirm their faith is to invite the family into the faith journey of the young person during the Confirmation Process.

At various times over the next two years the family may be encouraged to share the experiences of the young person as he/she continues to move into embracing the faith for themselves. Sponsors should also be invited into participation of key moments on the faith journey of the young person preparing for Confirmation. The following are suggestions that you may incorporate into the Confirmation Process:

- Initially, the parents can present their child to the Church/Catechist, at the start of the Confirmation Process via a prayer service. This evening should also be informational for parents.
- Another moment to invite parents is when young people are learning Catholic Morality. The vastness of these issues warrants all adults to be informed, and what better way for an adult to review Catholic Morality than with their children? Parents will naturally want to be aware of these very important topics to further the discussion at home with their young people.
- At times it will be important to structure prayer for the entire family and perhaps the sponsor. Reconciliation, as well as highlighting liturgical seasons may be a way to prayerfully engage the young person. Inviting the family may be a means of evangelization and grace for all involved.
- Recognizing the Sponsor in a special prayer service will be a means to evangelization as well as informative for the sponsor.
- Rather than traditional “parent meetings,” prayer experiences and Catechesis can be utilized to capitalize on “teachable moments.”

**Remember that the first Parent Meeting (to be held during the spring, for young people that will be entering year one of the Confirmation Process in September). It will include the following:**

- Prayer
- DVD by Bishop Murphy
- Explanation of the New Confirmation Process by various members of the Pastoral Staff.

This meeting will be for parents; they should be addressed in the context of prayer, if at all possible, in the Church. At the time of this meeting, the parish should be ready to inform the parents what the Confirmation Process would entail if a child is “not ready” to be Confirmed. All efforts should be made to assure parents that the parish doesn’t envision “delaying” Confirmation for large numbers of young people. The main reason for explaining an alternate process is to assure them that the parish is committed to walking with these young people if there is a need to “delay.”
Topics Covered During Confirmation Preparation:

Confirmation is a parish-based process and should proceed over two-full years. Upon completion, the young person participates in celebrating the Sacrament of Confirmation. The Goals of the Confirmation process are that all Confirmandi be able to understand, appreciate and articulate the basic doctrines of the Catholic faith and the principles of personal and social morality. All of the avenues utilized are meant to empower the young person to make a commitment to the person of Jesus Christ, the Catholic Church and a Catholic Christian way of life.

The following elements are essential components of Catechetical Preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation:

**Evangelization:** By studying the life and ministry of Jesus Christ as depicted in the Gospels, and by learning about the early Church communities, the young person should come to know the person of Jesus Christ and make a commitment to developing a relationship with Him.

**Faith & Morals:** The young person will have a growing understanding and appreciation of the basic doctrines of the Catholic faith and principles of Catholic Morality. Moral topics will be presented from the clear teaching of the Catholic Church.

**The Sacraments:** The young person will have a growing understanding of and appreciation of the Sacrament of Confirmation and its relationship to other Sacraments of Initiation, Healing and Service/ Vocation/ Commitment.

**Christian Sexuality:** The young person will understand and appreciate a healthy Catholic Christian attitude toward human, sexuality, chastity and marriage.

**Lifelong Learning:** The young person will understand that the process of catechesis and faith formation is a lifelong journey that continues throughout adulthood.

**Liturgy and Prayer:** The young person will understand and appreciate that regular attendance at Sunday Mass, an active personal prayer life and participation in the prayer life of the parish is part of the life of a Catholic.

**Spiritual Formation:** As the young person participates in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the liturgical aspects of the Confirmation Process, they will come to understand and appreciate that ongoing spiritual growth is part of what it means to live as a Catholic.

**Family & Sponsors:** Parents and sponsors are growing in awareness of the various dimensions of what it means to be a sponsor. They will understand their responsibility and their value in being witnesses of living the Catholic Christian life.
**Discipleship:** The young person will come to understand and appreciate what being a disciple of Jesus means; spiritually as well as the communal awareness.

**Christian Service; Social Justice; Stewardship:** The young person will become aware of the various ways to practice discipleship via service to the parish or to the wider community. Service hours are meant to foster the awareness of the importance of service to others, rather than being considered an end unto themselves. The young person will become aware of various social justice issues that call for prayer and a Catholic Christian response as good stewards of this earth.

**Vocations:** The young person will understand and appreciate God’s unique call to each person to a particular vocation. This will take place via an exploration of each of the Catholic Christian vocations: priesthood, religious life, deaconate, single life, married life.

**Respect Life:** The young person will grow in understanding and appreciating all stages of human life from conception to natural death. The teaching of the Catholic Church regarding all of these areas will be clearly presented.

❖ **Alternate Models for Confirmation Preparation**

If a young person is not ready for Confirmation one of the following models may be appropriate. Ultimately, the Pastor and the Confirmation Coordinator are responsible to either develop or select the process that will best meet the needs of particular candidates and their respective parishes.

Alternate Model #1
- Attendance at a particular Sunday Mass.
- Meeting with a Catechist immediately following Mass (approximately 1 hour).
- Content of the meeting would include: prayer, reflection on the Mass: Eucharist; Scripture (application to life).
- These young people should continue to attend their weekly class.
- This model would be best for those who have missed a serious number of classes or if a young person is not regularly attending Sunday Mass.
- Some safety nets should be in place to “catch” this early during the Confirmation preparation. For instance, the Catechist could check the journals weekly. If someone misses Mass repeatedly, a phone call home would seem necessary.
- At the start of the process, it is advised that a parish have a letter explaining expectations. Both the young person and their guardian should sign this letter and return it to the parish Religious Formation Office. (Remember that many teachers send home a similar notification regarding grading policies every September. This helps them to remind parents and students that they were fully aware of expectations at the beginning of the school year.) This is an approach that would be wise regarding Confirmation Preparation.
Alternate Model #2

- Attendance at any Mass (obviously already an expectation).
- Meet with a Catechist 1 hour prior to their regular class (which they will also attend).
- What’s different in this model? The young person and their parent can select a Mass on Sunday with some flexibility.
- It incorporates additional time on the same day as the regularly scheduled class.
- The content of this extra time would be reflection on Mass: Eucharist; Scripture (application to life).
- Multiple students can gather with a Catechist; perhaps Catechists could alternate teaching this extra class.
- See model #1 for suggestions regarding “catching” problems early during the Confirmation process.

(goodgroundpress.com has Faith Sharing resources for teens. These could be used for this extra class and should be used in conjunction with texts that are in conformity with the Catechism of the Catholic Church)

➢ RESOURCES

Catholic Updates

The following are Catholic Updates that may be used with Catechists/Parents of young people in Confirmation Programs. They are listed under specific topics yet may be broader in content.

Evangelization:

- God’s Love Is Free The Banquet Says It All. By Richard Rohr, O.F.M. C0402.

Faith/ Morals/ Christian Sexuality:

- Catholic Morality… Has It Changed? By Kenneth R. Overberg, S.J. C0896
- Faithful Citizens Bringing Moral Vision to Public Life. Condensed form of The U.S. Bishops’ Pastoral on Civic Responsibility. C0300

The Sacraments:

- Baptism- Our Lifelong Call. By Nicholas Lohkamp, O.F. M.
• Confirmation A Deepening of Our Catholic Identity. By Carol Luebering. C1095.
• How to Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation Today. By Thomas Richstatter, O.F.M., S.T.D. C0800.
• Sacraments: It All Starts With Jesus. By Thomas Richstatter, O.F.M. C0893.
• The Seven Sacraments- Symbols of God’s Grace. By Sandra DeGidio, O.S.M. C0483.

The Bible:
• The Four Faces of Jesus. By Virginia Smith. CU0390.
• A Popular Guide to Reading the Bible. By Macrina Scott, O.S.F. Cu1284.

Liturgy / Prayer/ Liturgical Year:
• Christmas Watch: What Are We Waiting For? By Richard Rohr, O.F.M., and John Bookser Feister. CU1289.
• The Feasts of Mary. By Robert M. Hamma. C0592.
• The Liturgical Year – How Christians Celebrate Time. By Sandra DeGidio, O.S.M. C1195.
• Liturgy – The Church’s „Work” of Praising God. By Carol Luebering. CU0487.
• The Rosary A Prayer for All Seasons. By Gloria Hutinson. C0803.

Family / Sponsors:
• Helping Our Children Grow in Faith. By Sandra DeGidio, O.S.M. CU0982.
• Mealtime Prayers Through the Year. By Robert M. Hamma. C0696.
• Seven Ways to Enrich Faith-Life in Your Home. By Mitch Finley. CU 0586.

Life Issues / Respect Life:
• Abortion – What the Church Teaches. By Helen Alvare. C0898.
• End of Life Ethics – Preparing for the Hour of Death. By Kenneth R. Overberg, S.J. C0806


Service / Social Justice/ Stewardship:


Vocations:

- Deacons Today – Ministers of Service. By James L. Alt
- Why Become a Priest, Sister or Brother Today? By Cathy Bertrand, S.S.N.D. C0994.

Discipleship:

- Eight Good Reasons for Being Catholic. By Richard Rohr, O.F.M., and Joseph Martos. CU0888
- Seven Disciplines of Successful Catholics. By Matthew J. Hayes. C0602.