

Preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation

Frequently Asked Questions 2010

Below is a summary of FAQs for parish Catechetical Leaders preparing teenagers to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. All information can be found in "Called to Faith," which outlines the Diocesan policies and guidelines for preparation of the Sacraments of Initiation. Specific information pertaining to Confirmation can be found on pages 55 to 62 [Section 4: Confirmation for Baptized Youth Who Have Received First Communion].

Be aware that the requirements for preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation will be changing for the academic year 2010 – 2011. There are several parishes across the Diocese piloting these new guidelines for implementation. The FAQs below apply to parishes who are not participating in the pilot program.

1. What are the age requirements for Confirmation?

In the Diocese of Richmond, a two-year preparation program is required to receive the Sacrament. Teenagers may start the two-year preparation program if they are in the 10th grade year OR have reached the age of 15 by September 1, 2008. Before starting this program, the teenager must attend Sunday Mass regularly and be enrolled in 1 year (i.e. 9th grade year) in a parish Religious Education program or Catholic School (Policy #78). The sacrament of Confirmation is conferred between Easter and Pentecost at the end of this two-year preparation program at the end of the 11th grade.

2. What should the 1st year of Confirmation preparation look like?

The spirit of the two year preparation program is to encourage our teenagers to participate fully in the life of the Church, from a strong sacramental life to catechesis to justice activities. There should not be a separate and distinct 1st year program for Confirmation preparation. In addition, teenagers who are enrolled in a Catholic School for their 10th grade year are not required to attend a 10th grade parish religious education program to be eligible to receive the sacrament. Please review the Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age published by the USCCB for details on essential curriculum elements for high school catechetical programs.

3. What should the 2nd year of Confirmation preparation look like?

The 2nd year preparation program should prepare candidates to receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The preparation process should **supplement** the existing religious education program for 11th graders in the parish or Catholic School.

4. Is a Confirmation candidate required to attend a retreat?

According to Policy #85, the candidates should participate in at least one retreat, other extended times for prayer and reflection during the special formation process. The retreat need not be overnight or at a venue separate from the church property, however, when working with adolescents it is clear that the experience becomes significantly more valuable when teenagers are removed from their environment and placed in a situation where they can spend time with their peers experiencing the living God.

5. What if a Confirmation candidate refuses to attend a retreat or misses a retreat experience?

As a parish community, be prepared to offer alternatives to candidates in these situations. Alternatives should still offer a similar experience of community and of the life of the Church. The Diocese does encourage participation in retreats with other parishes or Diocesan retreats as well.

6. Are service hours required?

Policy #86 specifically encourages candidates to be involved with the life of the parish including leadership structures and ministry groups. All service should be done as a part of the life of the Church and should not be separate and distinct. **Please note there is no specific hour requirement for service.**

7. What is the role of parents in the preparation process?

According to the Vatican II document, *Gravissimum Educationis* #3, parents are the primary educators of our young people and should have a significant role in the Confirmation preparation process. Parents mold, shape, and instill the values of the Catholic Church to their children. Every effort should be made to involve parents in the Confirmation formation program. The decision to receive the sacrament should be made jointly by the parents and the candidate.

8. Who may be chosen as a sponsor for a candidate?

Any practicing Catholic who is in good standing in the Church and who has received all three sacraments of initiation [Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist]. It is suggested that the sponsor be a Godparent from the candidate's Baptism to more closely show the connection between Baptism and Confirmation. Parents may not serve as a sponsor. There is no Diocesan policy as to the age of the sponsor. Each parish may decide an appropriate level of involvement of the sponsor in the parish Confirmation preparation process.

9. What if the sponsor cannot attend the Confirmation liturgy?

A proxy may be assigned by the Catechetical Leader or Pastor to stand-in for the sponsor. The “official” sponsor of the candidate is not the proxy, but rather, the original chosen sponsor.

For additional questions or support regarding:

- Confirmation preparation, contact Mike School in the Diocesan Office of Youth Ministry.
- Confirmation liturgy, contact Catherine Combier-Donovan in the Diocesan Office of Worship.
- “Called to Faith”, download at <http://intranet.richmonddiocese.org/docs/WFaith2.pdf>.
- Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age, download at <http://www.usccb.org/education/framework.pdf>.