

The Office of Evangelization and Catechesis



Confirmation Guidelines 2021-2022

Preparation for Confirmation should aim at leading the Christian toward a more intimate union with Christ and a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit—his actions, his gifts, and his biddings—in order to be more capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities of Christian life. To this end catechesis for Confirmation should strive to awaken a sense of belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ, the universal Church as well as the parish community. The latter bears special responsibility for the preparation of confirmands.

- Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1309

A Note of Appreciation

This guide, originally written in 2019 and updated in 2020, would not have been possible without the input, contributions, and consultation of the members (past and present) of our Diocesan Faith Formation Advisory Committee. The on-the-ground experience of these parish catechetical leaders was of immense value in creating these Confirmation Guidelines. Thank you:

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Introduction

The following guide applies to the 2021-2022 academic year for parishes in the Diocese of Burlington. Candidates during this time will normally be in grades 6 and 7.

Structure of the Confirmation Year

Parish Religious Education programs for grades 6 and 7 are expected to run throughout the academic year, placing a special focus on Confirmation during a 7-session period preceding the Sacrament of Confirmation. In other words, sacramental preparation for Confirmation will be **one part** of the full religious education year, similar to sacramental preparation for the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion. To give an idea of what this might look like, a sample religious education schedule for grades 6 and 7 is below.

As you can see, this sample parish begins their year on Catechetical Sunday and has Confirmation scheduled for Wednesday, May 4th. This parish's schedule includes about 10 normal sessions, 2 service projects, 2 days for catechist formation, holiday and various school breaks, a parent meeting for Confirmation, a Confirmation retreat, and 7 sessions for Confirmation preparation, including follow-up time with students after they receive the sacrament. This is, of course, a sample schedule, but hopefully it is helpful in seeing how the Confirmation curriculum can fit into the year.

Sample Schedule for Confirmation 2021-2022 School Year

Sept 13 th	Catechist Meeting	Jan 23 rd	Class 10 Vocations Lesson
Sept 19 th	Parent & Student Meeting	Jan 30 th	No Class
Sept 26 th	Class 1	Feb 6 th	Service Project #2
Oct 3 rd	Class 2	Feb 13 th	Confirmation Lesson 1
Oct 10 th	NO Class	Feb 20 th	No Class
Oct 17 th	Class 3	Feb 27 th	No Class
Oct 24 th	Class 4	Mar 6 th	Confirmation Lesson 2
Oct 31 st	Class 5	Mar 13 th	Confirmation Lesson 3
Nov 7 th	Class 6	Mar 20 th	Confirmation Lesson 4
Nov 13 th	Confirmation Retreat	Mar 27 th	Confirmation Lesson 5
Nov 21 st	Thanksgiving Service Project	April 3 rd	Confirmation Lesson 6
Nov 28 th	No Class	April 10 th	NO Class Palm Sunday
Dec 5 th	Class 7	April 17 th	NO Class Easter
Dec 12 th	Class 8	April 24 th	No Class Spring Break
Dec 19 th	No Class	May 1 st	Confirmation Rehearsal
Dec 26 th	No Class	May 4 th	Confirmation 7:00pm
Jan 2 nd	No Class	May 8 th	Confirmation Lesson 7 (Post Confirmation Reflection)
Jan 9 th	Catechist Meeting	May 15 th	Class 11 Looking ahead to next year
Jan 16 th	Class 9 Circle of Grace		

Family Formation

Many of our parishes have a religious education model of family formation. We encourage family formation as a catechetical model because it focuses on parents, encourages them to live the faith at home, and equips them to assume their roles as primary catechists of their children.² When family formation is done well, it can be beneficial for the parish and for the faith of those families involved. We realize that the above schedule is not directly helpful to such programs or others that don't follow a weekly model. We appreciate that Confirmation preparation may follow a different schedule in these instances. While the scheduling may be different for those programs, we still ask that such programs follow these guidelines.

Who Can Receive Confirmation?

“Every baptized person not yet confirmed can and should receive the sacrament of Confirmation.” In the Diocese of Burlington, for the 2021-2022 school year, it is the norm that Catholic students in grades 6 and 7 who have not yet received the Sacrament of Confirmation are eligible to seek reception of the sacrament.

In order to be accepted into Confirmation preparation, a candidate should have been actively involved in the parish during the current year as well as the full previous year. Active involvement in the parish is shown especially by regular Mass attendance. If this is not the case, we recommend that the pastor or the Parish Catechetical Leader (PCL) find ways to involve them (and their family) in the parish and consider delaying their Confirmation preparation until the next year.

If there is a question about a candidate's readiness for Confirmation, the decision to delay should not be made hastily or arbitrarily. Confirmation interviews should be scheduled in such a way as to permit adequate time for decision making before the celebration of the sacrament. More information on this interview can be found below. In considering whether a young person is properly prepared to receive Confirmation, we urge pastors and PCLs to take seriously the candidate's commitment to the faith and understanding of the sacrament. The pastor/administrator, in consultation with the candidate, parents, and catechetical staff, will ultimately make the decision regarding the delay. This should be done with sensitivity and the aim of eliciting greater openness to the grace of the Sacrament of Confirmation, and with a conscious awareness that this sacrament, like all sacraments, is an unmerited gift from God.

Elements of the Confirmation Program

The Catechism of the Church explains that “a candidate for Confirmation who has attained the age of reason must profess the faith, be in the state of grace, have the intention of receiving the sacrament, and be prepared to assume the role of disciple and witness to Christ, both within the ecclesial community and in temporal affairs.”⁴ Additionally, the Church says that Confirmation preparation programs should intentionally include parents and sponsors and include a retreat experience.⁵

For the sake of clarity, the list below represents the required elements of a Confirmation program in our diocese. It should be clear, however, that the sacraments are not something that we can earn by checking the right boxes. Rather, these elements are required to best prepare candidates to be properly disposed to receive the unmerited gift of Confirmation. Each of the following elements will be described in detail in the pages below.

- Active participation in the parish for 2 years prior to reception of Confirmation, shown especially by regular Mass attendance
- Candidate Interview
- Discipleship Plan
- Catechetical Content

A Confirmation candidate cannot be denied reception of this sacrament because of failure to participate in any one single element of a parish Confirmation program. However, **regular attendance at Holy Mass should be considered as the heart of a life of faith and the source from which all other efforts acquire their relevance and importance.**

Active Participation in the Parish

Please see the section “Who Can Receive Confirmation?” above for more details on this element.

Candidate Interviews (Pastoral Meetings) ⁶

This is an opportunity for the pastor to meet with the candidate to get to know the candidate and determine their readiness to receive Confirmation. These interviews should be scheduled near the beginning of the academic year, in order to permit adequate time for decision making before the celebration of the sacrament. This interview should help the candidate articulate their faith journey and their personal desire for the sacrament, as well as show their readiness to receive this sacrament. Not all candidates will be clearly ‘ready’ at the moment of this interview, especially if it is conducted early in the year. In that case, the interview can help parish leaders tailor preparation for those candidates. If it is not practical or possible for the pastor to conduct this interview, he can share or delegate this responsibility with others such as the PCL or the Confirmation catechist(s). This is one of the chief elements of preparation that will help the pastor/PCL determine the candidate’s readiness to receive Confirmation.

A sample list of questions for such an interview can be found in the appendix, form A-4.

² See The General Directory of Catechesis (GDC), 226-227, a section titled, “Parents, primary educators of their children.” See also St. Pope John Paul II, Familiaris Consortio 36; The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) 222, 1653; Lumen Gentium (LG) 11. ³ CCC 1306. ⁴ CCC 1319. ⁵ USCCB, National Directory for Catechesis (NDC), (Washington, DC., USCCB, 2005) pp. 122-123; CCC 1311.

Discipleship Plan

As a part of their preparation, candidates will be asked to create their own personal discipleship plan. In this plan, candidates will outline the ways in which they plan to “assume the role of disciple and witness to Christ, both within the ecclesial community and in temporal affairs.”⁷ In other words, they will be putting on paper their plans for living out their faith. This exercise will lead candidates to create a tangible plan for spiritual growth, parish involvement, and discipleship in everyday life. We recommend that students create their discipleship plan near the beginning of their Confirmation year, so that it can be a helpful resource for the candidate interviews as well as for the candidate’s sponsor. Candidates could create another discipleship plan right before or after their Confirmation, adjusting their plans as necessary. Discipleship plans will allow parish catechetical leaders, pastors, sponsors, and parents to hold students accountable to their own goals as they prepare for Confirmation and after their Confirmation. Thus, parishes should keep hard-copy records of these discipleship plans, so they are able to follow up with these students in future months and years. As we seek to increase personal relationship and mentorship in youth ministry, we hope this will be a valuable activity and resource to parishes. You can find a Discipleship Plan Leader’s Guide and Student Sheet in the appendix, forms A-2 and A-3, respectively. The student sheet can be edited to meet your parish’s needs.

Catechetical Content (What should be taught?)

The catechetical content for Confirmation has been grouped into 7 topics, outlined below. We recommend taking one hour-long session for each topic. A lesson guide for each session can be found in the appendix, form A-1.

Catechetical Content for Confirmation

1	The Sacrament of Confirmation
2	Our Desire for God & Salvation History
3	The Holy Spirit
4	Jesus Christ
5	Mission as Disciples
6	Challenge of Following Christ
7	Celebration & Looking Ahead

⁶ Some have pointed out that calling this an “interview” sends the wrong message – that it is a one-time meeting that you can either pass or fail. While these meetings are an important piece of determining a candidate’s readiness for Confirmation, it should not be seen as a “failure” if some candidates are not yet ready for the sacrament. If you prefer to use another name for these interviews, such as “pastoral meetings” or something of that nature, feel free to do so. ⁷ CCC 1319.

Retreat Experience 8

We strongly encourage parishes to provide a retreat experience for their Confirmation candidates, either through the parish or by participating in a diocesan retreat. The diocese will offer several Confirmation retreat pilgrimages through the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry and the Office of Religious Education and Catechesis. Information on these retreats will be posted on our website and sent out via email. The Dates of this Year's Pilgrimage Retreats to St Joseph's Cathedral are:

2021-2022 Confirmation Retreat Pilgrimage Schedule

Saturday November 13th

Saturday December 4th

Saturday February 19th

Saturday February 26th

Please contact Valerie Parzyck to reserve your parish date to attend:

vparzyck@vermontcatholic.org

If a parish desires to plan their own Confirmation retreat experience, we suggest that it include the following elements:

- A notably different environment than the normal religious education sessions.
- Experience of prayer, preferably outside of their normal experience (Lectio Divina, Eucharistic Adoration, the Rosary, Praise and Worship, etc.)
- Opportunity for the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- Opportunity to reflect on God's work in a candidate's life
- Opportunity to reflect on candidate's plan to respond to God's call

*Diocesan policy does not permit overnight retreats for 6th and 7th grade students without direct parental supervision and thus we generally do not recommend overnight Confirmation retreats.

Prayer & Penance⁹

Confirmation preparation should include opportunities for more intense prayer leading up to the reception of Confirmation. Rather than being a session of its own, prayer should be incorporated into each of the sessions. Two good places to start would be to model and teach candidates about the forms of prayer¹⁰ and expressions of prayer.¹¹ It is also important that the sacrament of Penance be offered regularly and especially before the sacrament of Confirmation to ensure that candidates are in a state of grace when they receive Confirmation.

Inclusion of Sponsors and Parents¹²

Parents and sponsors should be actively involved in the Confirmation preparation process. At minimum, this means having a parent meeting at the beginning of the year. Ideally, however, parents are included in the whole process and sponsors are empowered to act as spiritual guides for their candidates. To do this, you can include parents and sponsors in the Confirmation sessions, send them home with questions to discuss, or find other creative ways to connect the candidate with these important spiritual guides. A general template for what information should be covered at an introductory parent meeting can be found in the appendix, form A-1. Many publishers also offer useful templates and guides for parents and sponsor involvement, so be sure to check what your parish's Confirmation text/publisher has to offer. Prior to the actual selection of a sponsor, both candidates and parents should be instructed on the role and responsibility of a sponsor. This catechesis should occur at the parent and candidate meeting near the beginning of the year to allow candidates to select their sponsor as early in the year as possible. Selecting a sponsor early also gives sponsors the opportunity to be involved in as much of the preparation process as possible. For more information on the role of the sponsor, see "Roles of those involved with Confirmation," below.

Choosing a Name

It is a good and common practice for candidates to choose a name for their Confirmation. The name chosen should be a name of a Catholic saint or blessed whose life inspires them and who they can look up to as a patron saint. This name can be the same name that was chosen for Baptism or a new name. In picking a name, students should be encouraged and reminded that these holy men and women will truly pray for and befriend the candidates in their Christian walk.

Liturgical Service

We strongly encourage you to involve students in different elements of ministry throughout the year—serving as altar servers, lectors, ushers, greeters, musicians, liturgical planners, etc. While the diocese does not require that students complete a particular number of hours of service in this area, liturgical service should always be a part of a religious education program. Moreover, this form of service is even more important at this age, where students are likely to either deepen their involvement in the parish or vanish from parish life. If students are not involved in anything except religious education classes, why would they return to the parish after

Confirmation? It is important that parishes work to create a real home in the parish for these young people in their community.

Service Projects

“Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.”
Matthew 25:40

Service projects, or community service, are an important part of what it means to be a Christian. In serving the community, students learn that being a disciple of Christ goes beyond the walls of our churches and calls us to the peripheries, as Pope Francis so often remarks. While the diocese does not require candidates to complete a particular number of service hours, we do encourage parishes to seek and offer service opportunities appropriate for Confirmation candidates and it is appropriate to include these parish projects in your catechetical calendar.

Roles and Requirements of those involved with Confirmation

The Candidate

- To be willing and have a desire to enter into the process.
- To recognize that he/she, in consultation with his/her parents and under their guidance, has the choice to stop at any point within the process if he/she is unable to make the commitment necessary to be confirmed and that he/she may return when ready to continue.
(Cf. canons 889-891, Code of Canon Law).

The Parents/Guardians

- To encourage, support, and affirm their child’s involvement in the Confirmation process, especially in attending Mass regularly with their child
- To attend any orientation sessions, liturgical rites, and practices associated with the Confirmation process.
- To advise their child regarding the choice of a sponsor.

The Sponsor

- It is desirable, though not necessary, that the sponsor be the same person who fulfilled the role of baptismal sponsor.
- To perform the role of Confirmation sponsor, it is necessary that a person fulfill the following conditions:
 1. Have the aptitude and intention of fulfilling the role of sponsor.
 2. Be at least 16 years of age
 3. Be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has received the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist and who leads a life of faith. (i.e. Mass attendance on Sundays and Holy Days, Reconciliation & Eucharist at least once a year)
 4. Not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared.

5. Not be the father or mother of the one to be confirmed.

6. There is to be only one Confirmation sponsor.

(Cf. canons 873-874, 892-893, 920 Code of Canon Law).

- If a candidate is uncertain about whether their choice for a sponsor is appropriate, they should consult the PCL and/or pastor.
- In addition to the requirements above, it is the role of sponsor to attend any orientation sessions, liturgical rites, and practices associated with the Confirmation process.

The Community

- To support youth before, during and after Confirmation through their prayers, attendance at the Confirmation Mass, and other parish community activities.
- To integrate youth into the life of the whole Church.

The Priest

- To encourage parents, sponsors and the community to take an active part in the process as well as in the process of growing in their own understanding of their faith.
- To be an active presence in the lives of the young people of the parish in as many ways as possible, i.e., visiting group meetings, coming to retreats, supporting youth at liturgies.
- To conduct a personal interview with each candidate in which he can acknowledge the young person's participation in the process and share thoughts on ways he/she might participate in the life of the parish after the reception of Confirmation.

9 CCC 1310, 1319.

10 "The Holy Spirit ... also instructs [the Church] in the life of prayer, inspiring new expressions of the same basic forms of prayer: blessing, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, and praise." CCC 2644. See CCC 2626-2643 for more detail.

11 "The Christian tradition comprises three major expressions of the life of prayer: vocal prayer, meditation, and contemplative prayer." CCC 2721. See CCC 2700-2719 for more detail.

12 NDC, p. 122; CCC 1311.

Recommended Resources & Programs

As long as you ensure that the topics (Catechetical Content, above) are appropriately covered in your preparation program, you are free to use any catechetical texts that have been approved by the USCCB¹³ or our office of Evangelization and Catechesis. If you are looking for suggestions, we would recommend any of the resources below. For your convenience, we have also chosen the selected lessons which would cover the relevant Confirmation topics on a couple of the programs. Many programs also offer online activities and videos, downloadable apps etc.

The Sacrament of Confirmation (The Didache Series)

To match up with the 6 catechetical topics to be taught immediately before Confirmation, we would recommend using the following chapters:

- Introduction: Why Do We Need Confirmation?
- Chapter 1: God Reveals Himself to Man
- Chapter 2: The History of Salvation
- Chapter 3: God Sends his Holy Spirit
- Chapter 11: Life in the Holy Spirit: Witness
- Epilogue: The Sacrament of Confirmation and Living the Christian Life

Sealed in Fire: The Sacrament of Confirmation (Sophia Press)

This book is a Confirmation preparation program organized in a convenient 7-session format. Although the organization doesn't exactly match the 7 topics we give above, we do stand behind this book and recommend it. If you use this book as it is suggested, you can be confident that the topics above are being covered adequately throughout the lessons. Some lessons are designed to be done over the course of multiple days. We recommend adapting them to fit into one day, which would allow you to then cover all 7 lessons. For example, lesson 3 has 3 days' worth of activity. You might assign the day 1 work as homework and then cover a combination of days 2 and 3 in class.

- Lesson 1: Using Sophia Sketchpad to Teach about Confirmation
- Lesson 2: Exploring the Sacrament of Confirmation with Sacred Art
- Lesson 3: The Sacrament of Confirmation in Salvation History
- Lesson 4: The Celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation
- Lesson 5: The Effects of the Sacrament of Confirmation
- Lesson 6: Living the Sacrament of Confirmation
- Lesson 7: The Fruits of the Spirit and Capital Sins

Other Middle School Confirmation Curriculum Options Include:

Gifted With The Spirit Junior High Edition by Pflaum Publishing: 8 weekly reader style lessons
Confirmed in the Spirit by Loyola Press: 8 lesson workbook + 6 Sponsor & Candidate Activities
Believe, Celebrate, Live Confirmation by Sadlier: 6 Lesson Workbook
Call to Celebrate Confirmation by Our Sunday Visitor: 8 Lesson Workbook

¹³ Search for the USCCB Conformity Listing of Catechetical Texts. This list is updated regularly. As of April 2020, the list can be found here: <http://www.usccb.org/about/evangelization-and-catechesis/subcommittee-oncatechism/upload/Current-Conformity-List.pdf>

Curriculum Guidelines for Grades 6 and 7 (Outside of Conf. prep)

In planning the year, you will notice that the Confirmation sessions only account for about a third of the religious education year. In the sample parish schedule on page 5, for example, there are still about 10 classes that will need to be planned. For these classes, we ask that you (as you have done in the past) plan your own content for these classes, using USCCB approved texts or materials recommended from our office. If you are using The Sacrament of Confirmation (Didache Series) for sacramental prep, you can choose from lessons 4-10 and 12 to use in your other classes.

For other ideas, please contact our office!

Frequently Asked Questions

1. If Confirmation preparation is only 7 sessions, can a student simply enroll in just that part of the program?

No. While it is true that the catechetical content for the sacraments of Confirmation takes place during 7 sessions, this is only one part of preparation for Confirmation. An even more essential part of a student's preparation is their regular and active participation in parish life and continued catechesis. Both elements are served in the parish's religious education program. Unless this student and their family are active in the parish in other ways, the norm is for students to participate in the fullness of the religious education program that year. Rather than seek a bare minimum for reception of the sacrament, we hope to instill in parents and their children the desire to be involved in parish life, especially after children have received Confirmation.

2. If Confirmation preparation takes place over 7 sessions, what am I supposed to teach for the rest of the year?

In one sense, Confirmation preparation begins all the way back at Baptism! However, as you point out, the immediate catechetical preparation does take place over 7 sessions, which leaves you with more sessions for you to plan. You can find this covered in more detail above in "Curriculum Guidelines for Grades 6 and 7."

3. How are 6th and 7th grade students in Catholic school being prepared for Confirmation?

The Catholic school religion curriculum will include the catechetical topics necessary for Confirmation. This does not mean that Catholic school students don't need to participate in the parish to receive Confirmation, however. Whether a candidate goes to Catholic school or not, regular Mass attendance and active participation in the parish are essential requirements for Confirmation. Each parish pastor has the authority to decide how his candidates will be best prepared. In other words, a pastor may decide that his parishioners should go to religious education in addition to their Catholic school classes. Additionally, certain elements of Confirmation preparation (parent meeting, retreat, rehearsal) are very likely to take part in the parish for both Catholic school students and other students. For this reason, each family will have to ask their pastor how their child should prepare for preparation in their particular parish.

4. Given the structure of my program, it makes sense to offer the Sacrament of Confirmation to my 5th grade student(s) this year as well. Is that an option?

As we transition to 6th grade, we are trying to ensure that all parishes (as much as possible) are preparing the same age range of children. Generally, we ask that parishes comply with this. (See the chart in “Reference Information” for the graces of Confirmation, by year). While there are situations in which prepared children can receive the Sacrament of Confirmation earlier than the diocesan norms, these are to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. If a decision is made at the parish level to make an exception, the pastor would also need permission from Bishop Coyne, which can be requested in a letter to the Bishop’s office.

5. A child in grade 6-7 has approached the parish for Confirmation preparation this year, but we have never seen him or her at Mass nor at religious education – how should we respond?

With charity. Every effort should be made by the pastor and/or the PCL to get to know this student and their family and understand why they have come forward for Confirmation. This family should be welcomed with open arms to the parish. After one has taken the time to understand their situation, the general norms should be followed, as far as is pastorally prudent – namely, that a Confirmation candidate have been active in parish life that year and the year prior. The pastor and/or PCL should accompany them in involving them in parish life so that they can enter the Confirmation program the following year.

6. Why have the requirements for community and liturgical hours been removed?

While we strongly encourage parishes to include community and liturgical service as part of their programs at all grade levels, we have chosen to remove this as a requirement attached to Confirmation. We want to be clear that the Sacrament of Confirmation is a gift, freely given to us by God. Requiring service hours and liturgical hours often causes a shift from “freely receiving” to a focus on counting and tracking these hours, which takes time and effort away from other elements of preparation. There is also a risk, in requiring these hours, that we erroneously communicate (often to parents) the message that “if you tick these boxes, you can earn Confirmation.” Thus, while community and liturgical service are essential aspects of the Christian life, we have decided to remove them as a requirement for Confirmation.

7. What are we supposed to do with students after Confirmation?

Celebrate! Reflect! Meet! The “7th session” in Confirmation preparation is meant to take place after Confirmation. We hope that this can be the first of many opportunities for these young people to continue gathering in community and experiencing fellowship and prayer in the Church. So, in the immediate sense, you should organize ways for students to keep connected with the parish right away after Confirmation. Your parish should have youth ministry options designed to continue involving these students in future years. You might, for example, have a youth bible study, a praise and worship night, a summer service trip, increased opportunities for liturgical service, and/or many other things that are clearly and obviously offered to the young people at the parish. For more ideas about what might work at your parish, contact the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry.

Reference Information

Confirmation Plan (By Year)	
2021-2022	Confirm Grades 6 and 7
2022-2023	Confirm Grade 6

Reference and Explanation on Required Elements for Confirmation Preparation

Candidate must profess the faith

CCC 1319 Can. 889§2

To be able to profess the faith, a candidate must have been instructed so that they have knowledge of the faith. This is not an expectation that a candidate has mastered all or even many of the elements of our faith. Confirmation is not meant to be an end of catechetical formation. Rather, a candidate must be familiar enough with the faith to confidently profess to be Catholic. It is perfectly appropriate for students to have questions about some aspects of the faith at this stage in their life.

Candidate must be in a state of grace

CCC 1310,1319

“To receive Confirmation one must be in a state of grace. One should receive the sacrament of Penance in order to be cleansed for the gift of the Holy Spirit. More intense prayer should prepare one to receive the strength and graces of the Holy Spirit with docility and readiness to act.” CCC 1310

Candidate must have the intention of receiving the sacrament

CCC 1319 Can. 889 §2

To have the intention of receiving the sacrament, a candidate must have suitable instruction to be able to have sufficient knowledge of the sacrament. Similar to the notes on “professing the faith” above, this does not mean that a candidate must perfectly understand all aspects of the Sacrament of Confirmation. Rather, their knowledge of the sacrament should be enough that they are able to intend to receive it.

Candidate must be prepared to assume the role of disciple and witness to Christ, both within the ecclesial community and in temporal affairs.

CCC 1319

To fulfill this element, candidates must first understand what it means to be a disciple and witness to Christ, as well as know how they might be able to carry this out in their state of life. As part of meeting this requirement, each candidate will create a personalized “discipleship plan.”

Retreat experience

NDC (p.122-123)

A developmentally appropriate retreat experience should be included as a part of the sacramental preparation. In order to emphasize the unity of the Church and familiarize candidates with our Bishop, we encourage parishes to plan a pilgrimage to the cathedral.

Inclusion of sponsors and parents

NDC (p.122) CCC 1311

It must be ensured that “parents and sponsors are involved in the catechetical preparation of the children for Confirmation.” (NDC p. 122)

A-1 Confirmation Lessons & Parent Meeting Guide

Parent & Candidate Introductory Meeting

Objective

At the end of this meeting, Confirmation candidates and their parents will understand the basics of the sacrament Confirmation, the role of the sponsor, and the “housekeeping” details of how Confirmation preparation is handled at the parish.

Audience

All Confirmation candidates and their parents should attend this meeting.

Topics that should be covered

- Basic review of what the Sacrament of Confirmation is
- The role of the parent
- Explanation of choosing a Confirmation name
- The role of the Confirmation sponsor
- Housekeeping specific to each parish:
 - Dates of Confirmation Sessions
 - Date of Confirmation
 - Dates of any other sponsor or parent meetings
 - Any other information...
- Clear message that Confirmation *is not the end* – explain what the parish offers next year for those who have been Confirmed

Confirmation Session #1 – Retreat Experience

The following information on retreats can also be found in the 2019-2020 Confirmation Guidelines:

Diocesan Retreats

It is important that parishes provide a retreat experience for their Confirmation candidates. The diocese will offer several Confirmation retreats through the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry. Information on these retreats will be posted on our website and sent out through the monthly PCL Newsletter.

Other Retreat Experiences

If it is not possible to attend a diocesan retreat, a parish may offer another retreat experience. A retreat experience can be an overnight retreat, a one-day retreat, or another experience that the PCL deems appropriate. Whatever the format, we suggest that all Confirmation retreat experiences should include the following elements:

- A notably *different* environment than the normal religious education sessions.
- Experience of prayer, preferably outside of their normal experience (Lectio Divina, Eucharistic Adoration, the Rosary, Praise and Worship, etc.)
- Opportunity for the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- Opportunity to reflect on God’s work in a candidate’s life
- Opportunity to reflect on candidate’s plan to respond to God’s call

One good (and ready-made!) resource for a retreat is the “Chosen Confirmation Retreat” offered by Ascension Press. They offer a weekend model and a one-day retreat model.¹

¹ Available for free at http://confirmationstudy.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Retreat_Chosen_download.pdf
This retreat works well even if you haven’t used the *Chosen* program with your students

Confirmation Session #2 – The Sacrament of Confirmation

Objective

At the end of this session, candidates will understand how Confirmation fits in with the other Sacraments of Initiation. Candidates will also understand the rite of Confirmation and its basic symbols, as well as be familiar with the effects of Confirmation.

Connection to Confirmation

This is the session that most fully explains Confirmation, which candidates are preparing for. Future sessions will continually look ahead and connect to Confirmation, but all the basic elements of the sacrament should be covered here.

Essential Topics

- The Sacraments of Initiation (CCC 1212)
- How Confirmation interacts with other the Sacraments of Initiation (CCC 1285, 1316, 1321)
- Instruction on the Rite of Confirmation and its basic symbols (CCC 1293-1301)
 - The imposition of hands
 - The anointing with Sacred Chrism
 - The words of the sacramental formula
- Explain effects of the Sacrament of Confirmation (CCC 1302-1305)
- The Bishop is the ordinary minister of the Sacrament of Confirmation (CCC 1313)

Other notes/suggestions

- This is a good lesson to get a sense of the students' understanding of the Sacrament of Confirmation. You could begin class by asking – "What do you know about Confirmation?" This allows you to get some discussion going and give you an idea of what gaps exist and what needs to be corrected.
- Another possibility is to demonstrate Confirmation by 'acting out' the rite of Confirmation. Doing so engages the candidates' senses and can give them a better feel for what is physically going to be happening when they are Confirmed.

Confirmation Session #3 – Our Desire for God & Salvation History

Objective

At the end of this session, candidates will understand the natural and unquenchable desire for God in the human heart and how God communicates himself to us throughout salvation history. Each candidate should understand the “big picture” of Salvation History, from Creation right up to their lives today.

Connection to Confirmation

As we come to recognize our own hunger and thirst for God, we see that Confirmation helps us along that journey because it “unites us more firmly to Christ,” “increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit,” and “renders our bond with the Church more perfect” (CCC 1303). In other words, now that we can understand why we desire God and how he makes himself known to us in history, we can also see how Confirmation is a gift that draws us even nearer to God.

Essential Topics

- Our Desire for God (CCC 27-30)
- Ways of Coming to Know God (CCC 31-35)
- Revelation (CCC 50-53, 68, 69)
- Salvation History (CCC 54-67, 69-73)
 - Creation
 - Fall
 - Promise of Redemption
 - Covenant
 - Incarnation
 - Redemption
 - The Church
- In explaining our desire for God and how we can come to know God, it is worth discussing the point that belief in God is not opposed to our reason (CCC 35).
- For the “salvation history” section, you can use a timeline to show the major events in salvation history. This is a good opportunity for students to get involved. For example, you could have students make their own timelines or have the class work together to guess/understand the events as they make one big timeline.

Other notes/suggestions

- In discussing our desire for God, you can talk about how *nothing* on earth, even very good things, gives us perfect and lasting satisfaction. Coming up with different examples, and how they fall short, can be a good interactive activity. This unquenchable desire for satisfaction helps to demonstrate that we are built for something *beyond* this earthly life.

Confirmation Session #4 – The Holy Spirit

Objective

At the end of this session, candidates will have a greater understanding of the third person of the Trinity. Students should also be able to recognize the Holy Spirit in their lives and know how to pray to the Holy Spirit.

Connection to Confirmation

“It is evident from its celebration that the effect of the sacrament of Confirmation is the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost” (CCC 1302). Moreover, Confirmation “increase the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us” (CCC 1303) This session, then, will better prepare students for this special encounter with the Holy Spirit.

Essential Topics

- The Holy Spirit as third person of the Trinity (CCC 683-686, 743)
- The Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit (CCC1831)
- The Fruits of the Holy Spirit (CCC 1832)
- The Holy Spirit’s Role in Confirmation (CCC 1302-1303)
- Prayer and the Holy Spirit (CCC 741, 2652, 2661, 2670-2672)

Other notes/suggestions

- The Holy Spirit is often the most neglected of the three persons in the Trinity. This class provides a good opportunity for students to “get to know” the Holy Spirit, both in understanding some basics about Him, but also in understanding how to pray with and to the Holy Spirit.

Confirmation Session #5 – Jesus Christ

Objective

At the end of this session, candidates will know who Jesus Christ is, be familiar with his life, and understand the invitation to have a personal relationship with Him.

Connection to Confirmation

Confirmation “unites us more firmly to Christ” (CCC1303) and candidates are expected to “be prepared to assume the role of disciples and witness to Christ” (CCC1319). This session, which re-introduces candidates to Jesus and his life, will serve as a foundation for the next session (Mission as Disciples).

Essential Topics

*This is a big topic. In creating your lesson, consider your particular group of students to decide which elements of Jesus’ life would be most useful to study. Many of these topics will have already been covered in session #2.

- Who is Jesus (Matthew 16:15, CCC 452-455)
- Why did Jesus come to earth? (CCC 456-460)
- The Incarnation (CCC 461-469, 479-480)
- Jesus’ Life (CCC 512, 516-518)
- The Mysteries of Jesus’ hidden life (CCC 531-534)
- The Mysteries of Jesus’ public life (CCC 535-560)
- The Trial of Jesus (CCC 595-596)
- The Crucifixion of Jesus (CCC 619-623)
- The Resurrection of Jesus (CCC 639-640, 655)
- The Ascension of Jesus (CCC 659-667)

Other notes/suggestions

- A useful discussion in the question of “Who Jesus Is” is the “Liar, Lunatic, Lord” argument. The argument essentially says Jesus can only be one of three things: someone who is lying about who he is, someone who is crazy, or truly who he claims to be. The popular notion that Jesus is a good person or simply a moral teacher doesn’t hold up, and this argument is helpful in demonstrating that point.

Confirmation Session #6 – Mission as Disciples

Objective

At the end of this session, candidates will more deeply understand what it means to be Catholic and to live as a disciple of Christ. If students haven't already finished their discipleship plan, they will do so in this session or the next. These themes will be continued in the next session.

Connection to Confirmation

A major part of Confirmation preparation is attempting to “awaken a sense of belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ, the universal Church as well as the parish community” (CCC 1309) and candidates must “be prepared to assume the role of disciple and witness to Christ” (CCC 1319). This session, as well as the next one, will make the ideas of discipleship and life in the parish practical and possible for candidates.

Essential Topics

- The Precepts of the Church (CCC 2041-2043)
- Moral Life and Missionary Witness (CCC 2044-2046)
- Mission—A requirement of the Church's catholicity (CCC 849-856)
- The apostolate (CCC 863-865)
- Universal Call to Holiness (CCC 2013, 2028-2029)

Other notes/suggestions

- As a reminder, students should have completed, or perhaps just began their discipleship plans. Some parishes will implement discipleship plans at the beginning of the year. Otherwise, the discipleship plans for students should be introduced during this lesson, in the hopes of completing it as soon as possible in preparation for Confirmation and their faith walk thereafter.
- It would be appropriate in this session for the catechist, or another suitable parishioner, to give a witness to how *they* live a life of discipleship. Or even better, how they may have lived a life of discipleship when they were the same age as candidates for Confirmation. Any witness given should be age-appropriate and applicable to the lives of these candidates.

Confirmation Session #7 – The Challenge of Following Christ

Objective

At the end of this session, candidates will understand why living as a disciple is challenging but also why it is ultimately worth it. The candidate's discipleship plans should be submitted before or during this session.

Connection to Confirmation

As we have stated before, candidates preparing for Confirmation must "be prepared to assume the role of disciple and witness to Christ" (CCC 1319). This session will focus on the reality of discipleship, the good and the bad, as candidates prepare to receive Confirmation and ultimately continue their journey as followers of Christ.

Essential Topics

- Our Participation in Christ's Sacrifice (CCC 618)
- Becoming fellow workers in God's kingdom by our actions, prayers and sufferings (CCC 307)
- Taking up One's Cross (Matthew 10:34-39, Mark 8:34-38, Luke 9:23-27)
- The Cost of Discipleship (Luke 14:25-33, CCC 2544)
- The Cross and Self-Denial (Matthew 16:24-28, Romans 8:17, Colossians 1:24)
- Heaven (CCC 1023-1029)

Other notes/suggestions

- In addition to the Scripture and Catechism references above, be sure to include some real-world examples of how these young people might be called to suffer for the faith. How might they be embarrassed or set apart for believing in Jesus Christ? Are there any appropriate examples that you or another adult could share where you have experienced the cross of discipleship? As always, examples should be age-appropriate.
- Being a disciple isn't easy, but that doesn't mean you have to leave this session on a note of doom and gloom! Being a disciple of Jesus ultimately means sharing eternal life with him in heaven. "Heaven is the ultimate end and fulfillment of the deepest human longings, the state of supreme, definitive happiness" (CCC 1024). Make sure that candidates are aware that they are called to this supreme and definitive happiness.

Confirmation Session #8 – Celebration & Looking Ahead

(to take place *after* candidates have received Confirmation)

Objective

At the end of this session, candidates should understand how your parish plans to continue supporting their spiritual journey. They should be encouraged to continue being involved in the parish and growing in their relationship with God.

Connection to Confirmation

The candidates are no longer candidates – they have received the sacrament of Confirmation! This session will demonstrate that their spiritual life and life in the parish does not end, but rather continues to grow after Confirmation.

Possible Ideas

- Celebrate! Have a reception to celebrate their Confirmation and to encourage them to consider their next steps.
- Have a church ministry fair:
 - Leaders from different ministries at the church (lectors, eucharistic ministers, ushers, greeters, service outreach, maintenance, Knights of Columbus, etc.) talk about their ministries and invite these newly-confirmed members of the church to be involved.
- Have a group discussion. Ask the group:
 - What was your experience at Confirmation?
 - Did anything surprise you?
 - What are your plans moving forward?
 - What one thing that we covered this year stuck with you?
 - What was it like having a sponsor?
- Plan, *with* your students, the following year
 - Provide some options of youth group ideas or study programs
 - Ask where their interests are and what they'd like to do
 - Be open to their ideas!

A-2 Youth Discipleship Plan – Leaders Guide

Candidates for Confirmation must be prepared to assume the role of disciple and witness to Jesus Christ in their church community (CCC 1319). Many parishes in Vermont (and around the country) are frustrated by the number of teens who get confirmed but then are never seen again. The hope behind the following initiative is to assist our youth (in conjunction with their parents) in creating a scaffolding through which their faith can grow in the years following Confirmation. Thus, the Diocese of Burlington is asking each parish to begin (if you have not done so already) a program by which teens will prayerfully discern how they will continue their walk of faith both in the parish, but also in the larger community. Though this discipleship plan can take a number of different forms, we would like to offer some general guidelines and recommendations.

- 1) **Parental involvement.** Parents need to play an instrumental role in any discipleship program. John Paul II in his encyclical Familiaris Consortio (The Fellowship of the Family) states:

By means of love, respect and obedience towards their parents, children offer their specific and irreplaceable contribution to the construction of an authentically human and Christian family. They will be aided in this if parents exercise their unrenounceable authority as a true and proper "ministry," that is, as a service to the human and Christian well-being of their children, and in particular as a service aimed at helping them acquire a truly responsible freedom, and if parents maintain a living awareness of the "gift" they continually receive from their children.

Later in the same encyclical John Paul writes:

By reason of their dignity and mission, Christian parents have the specific responsibility of educating their children in prayer, introducing them to gradual discovery of the mystery of God and to personal dialogue with Him: It is particularly in the Christian family, enriched by the grace and the office of the sacrament of Matrimony, that from the earliest years children should be taught, according to the faith received in Baptism, to have a knowledge of God, to worship Him and to love their neighbor.

Indeed, you should avoid any discipleship program that omits parents. Parents should instead be viewed as collaborators and partners in this ongoing journey of faith with their children. We understand, and have seen firsthand, how parents are sometimes an impediment to spiritual growth (valuing sports and other activities over church, poor personal witness, etc.), but we must continue to acknowledge and build up their roles as the first educators in the faith.

- 2) **Prayerful discernment.** The process of developing a plan for discipleship should be prayerful and not merely thoughtful. Though it is impossible to have a full picture of God's plan at any given moment in time, we believe God seeks to share His life and plan if we ask. St. Paul says this "mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, has now been manifested to His saints" (Colossians 1: 26). It is imperative that we communicate to our young people that the plan God has for them are 'plans to prosper and not to harm them, to give them hope and a future' (Jeremiah 29: 11). Finally, following Christ is ultimately, and at first, a turning away from our will and what we want to do. Jesus says, 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me' (Luke 9: 23). Though following Christ does bring joy and peace, it is not and never will be easy. In other words, it is crucial that we communicate the challenges of being a follower of Christ and the 'narrow road' and 'narrow gate' (Mt. 7: 14) they will encounter as they continue on their journey of faith.
- 3) **Listening to their stories.** This process should be conversational and personal. We *have* to move beyond programs and situations where we do not truly and deeply know the teens who are in our pews. Jesus is the model for this approach. Like the road to Emmaus, we are called to listen to their stories, their hearts, their

fears, and their dreams. We want to create parish communities where a young person will know there are mentors and leaders who are concerned about them and care in a clear and palpable way about their ongoing formation *after* they get confirmed. Indeed, we hope any ongoing sit downs (we recommend not calling these 'interviews') and discipleship forming program will begin a *long and ongoing* relationship with our young people that will continue through adolescence and into young adulthood. It is not enough to confirm them with no follow up, accountability, etc. This is the fundamental shift we are looking for through this program.

The discernment of their own gifts, charisms and ministry opportunities should be a joy-filled experience. Pope Francis writes in The Joy of the Gospel:

The Church which "goes forth" is a community of missionary disciples who take the first step, who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice. An evangelizing community knows that the Lord has taken the initiative, he has loved us first (cf. *1 Jn 4:19*), and therefore we can move forward, boldly take the initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast. Such a community has an endless desire to show mercy, the fruit of its own experience of the power of the Father's infinite mercy. Let us try a little harder to take the first step and to become involved. Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. The Lord gets involved and he involves his own, as he kneels to wash their feet. He tells his disciples: "You will be blessed if you do this" (*Jn 13:17*). An evangelizing community gets involved by word and deed in people's daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary, and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others. Evangelizers thus take on the "smell of the sheep" and the sheep are willing to hear their voice. An evangelizing community is also supportive, standing by people at every step of the way, no matter how difficult or lengthy this may prove to be. . . Finally an evangelizing community is filled with joy; it knows how to rejoice always. It celebrates every small victory, every step forward in the work of evangelization.

Pope Francis elsewhere talks about the need of evangelizers who should not 'look like someone who has just come back from a funeral', but instead joy-filled ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervor because they have themselves received the joy of Christ in their own hearts. Again, may this process be filled with joy, hope and love!

4) The discipleship plan should be specific and concrete, but also open to movements of the Holy Spirit as a young person's particular journey of faith unfolds.

Everett Fritz in his book The Art of Forming Young Disciples says:

Ministry is the process of meeting a person's pastoral needs. This is an extremely important concept. It is not enough to have a curriculum, resources, structure, volunteers, participation and events. If youth ministry at the parish doesn't meet a young person's primary pastoral needs, then youth ministry is not happening. To make disciples, we must form people intellectually, and as human persons. . . Every individual has pastoral needs, and when a person *lacks relationships with mentors and like-minded peers in his church* (italics added), he lacks the relationships that are necessary to meet his individualized needs. If success is measured by making disciples, then our ministry has to start with a plan for meeting the individualized needs of each young person.

Fritz states that teens have a hierarchy of needs that we, as adults and mentors, need to focus upon and seek to meet: the need to be understood, the need to belong, the need to be transparent and real, a need for critical thinking about the faith and a need for guidance. We believe the discipleship plan should help meet and address these needs of each young person. *Without meeting them where they are* and addressing these needs, we will be speaking above and beyond them.

5) Mentors and creating a mentoring culture

One of our greatest challenges moving forward is creating a mentoring culture with the adults in the parish. Religious education where teens are put into a classroom is, in many ways, convenient, safe and secure. Though not to the omission of religious education and intellectual formation, the shift we are proffering is seismic in nature. We are looking for communities of faith who collaboratively work together to mentor and model for our young people what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. A community that follows up, holds accountable and creates a spiritual home for all the youth who come to our churches. What this looks like exactly in each parish will vary, but creating a mentoring culture needs to be at the core of this discipleship paradigm and program.

Suggested further reading on forming young disciples

- The Art of Forming Disciples – Everett Fritz (Publisher: Sophia Institute Press (February 22, 2018)
- Forming Intentional Disciples – Sherry Weddell (Publisher: Our Sunday Visitor; 1st edition (July 10, 2012)
- Sustainable Youth Ministry – Mark DeVries (Publisher: IVP Books; 1 edition (November 10, 2008)
- Engaging a New Generation – Frank Mercadante (Publisher: Our Sunday Visitor (May 31, 2012)
- Growing Teen Disciples – Frank Mercadante (Publisher: Saint Mary's Press (June 18, 2002)
- Discipleship Focused Youth Ministry – Eric Gallagher (Publisher: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform; 1 edition (September 29, 2016)
- Purpose Driven Youth Ministry – Doug Fields (Publisher: Zondervan; Youth Specialties edition (February 24, 2013)

Resource to consider:

Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory. Howard Gardner, longtime Professor of Education at Harvard University, developed an influential theory utilized throughout academia today -- the theory of multiple intelligences. We believe this template may be useful in helping young people discern not only what their 'intelligences' are, but how God can use their gifts to his glory and purpose. Thus, this would be a 'grace building upon nature' approach – as Aquinas wrote, “Although man is inclined to an end by nature, yet he cannot attain that end by nature, but only by grace because of the exalted character of the end”. Many young people today suffer from nihilism, fatalism, a lack of purpose, confidence and mission. Gardner's model helps to identify the natural strengths each person has. Though we want them to be involved in our parishes, we should teach and equip them to see discipleship as something that is woven and integrated into the fabric of their lives. A simple example might be 'musical intelligence'. How can I be a follower of Jesus Christ as a musician? A discipleship program can easily incorporate Gardner's theory into discerning how the Holy Spirit can utilize these gifts. An article on Gardner's Multiple Intelligence theory can be found here:

<https://www.cornerstone.edu/blogs/lifelong-learning-matters/post/what-are-multiple-intelligences-and-how-do-they-affect-learning>

Since his theory came out, a couple other important ones have been added – namely moral and spiritual/existential intelligence. Learn more here:

<http://infed.org/mobi/howard-gardner-multiple-intelligences-and-education/>

Note, it is *vital* important that any utilization of Gardner's theory does not veer off into pop psychology or a tool that is merely self-serving. Instead the goal is developing the moral virtues and recognizing how these virtues are developed within the real-world context of sports, music, theater, work, science, etc.

Parish Involvement

A. Things I've enjoyed doing in the parish (circle all that apply):

- Attending class
- Eucharistic Adoration
- Stations of the Cross
- Praying the Rosary
- Lector (read at Mass)
- Handing out bulletins
- Altar Serving
- Decorating the church
- Community Service
Projects
- Greetings people at
the door
- Music Ministry
(singing or playing an
instrument)
- Retreats with friends
- Parish meals, picnics,
games
- Praying with others
- Going to Mass
- Other: _____

- B. It is vitally important for every Christian to offer their time, talent and treasure to the service of God, the Church and the world. What are some ways you can stay involved here at our parish? Are there any new ideas you would like to offer to our parish community? Be specific and concrete.

Being a disciple in everyday life

"So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." 1 Corinthians 10: 31

"And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." Colossians 3: 17

What does it mean to be a disciple in everyday life? What plan of action can you make for being a disciple at home, at school, in your activities, etc.?

A-4 Candidate Interview Sample Questions

The confirmation candidate interview should be a conversation, not a quiz or a test. This interview should help the candidate articulate their personal desire for the sacrament and also share where they are in their spiritual life. We *do not* recommend simply “going through the questions” below; they are simply examples of helpful topics and ways of getting this conversation started.

It is perfectly fine if candidates don’t have perfect answers or have some misunderstandings about the faith at this stage. This gives the interviewee a great opportunity to work on those things with the candidate in the coming months!

1. What does prayer mean to you? How do you pray?
2. Do you ever pray as a family at home?
3. Is your family able to come to Mass regularly?
4. Who is Jesus?
5. What can you tell me about the Holy Spirit?
6. What are some of the things that you enjoy doing in life? What are you good at?
7. What do you like about being Catholic? What do you find challenging about being Catholic?
8. What do you like about our parish?
9. How are you involved in our parish? What would you like to do or do more in the parish?
10. What would you like to learn more about? What questions do you have?
11. What do you know about the Sacrament of Confirmation?
12. Do you want to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation?