

Celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation

FAQ's 2009

Below is a summary of FAQs for parishes preparing to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation. All information below supersedes any information found in "Called to Faith," which outlines the Diocesan policies and guidelines for preparation and celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation.

1. Who may confer the sacrament of Confirmation?

The primary minister of the sacrament of Confirmation is the bishop. He may, if necessary, delegate the ministry to one of his vicars. The bishop has granted all pastors the faculty to confirm those Catholic adults who seek to complete their full initiation. In the celebration of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, the pastor who baptizes catechumens must also confirm and give Eucharist to them at the same celebration. He will also confirm Christians who are being received into the full communion of the Catholic Church. This applies to all adults and children of catechetical age (seven years and above).

2. Which readings should we choose for the confirmation liturgy, the Sunday readings or some others?

This depends on the day when it is celebrated. If the sacrament will be celebrated at Sunday liturgy (Saturday evening or Sunday) then the readings must be those of the Sunday in the Easter Season. If, however, it will be celebrated on another day of the week, then readings may be chosen from the vast number of choices offered at the end of the *Rite of Confirmation* itself.

***PLEASE NOTE:** When Bishop Sullivan presides, the readings of the day should be proclaimed.

3. Which Mass setting should be used?

The same criteria that are used in the above question apply. On a day other than Sunday in Easter, the Ritual Mass for Confirmation should be used, Sacramentary Ritual Mass I-4, Page 834.

4. What color vestments should the clergy use?

Either red or white may be chosen, as long as all concelebrants wear the same color.

5. Should the candidates enter in procession?

While this should not resemble a graduation entrance march, they may process in prior to the beginning of the liturgy and the procession of liturgical ministers.

6. Are the candidates called by name for the Presentation of Candidates?

All the candidates should be called by name, parish by parish and stand in place. They are then seated, and after the homily are asked to stand again for the Renewal of Baptismal Promises.

7. NEW! What about the letters the youth write to their pastor? Do we continue to create a "blended letter" to be read at the Confirmation liturgy?

No. No letter is to be read. The custom of the *confirmandi*'s letters to the pastor may continue, but the compilation of excerpts from them into one letter to be read aloud will no longer take place at the Confirmation liturgy. It is recommended that this be done at a parish Sunday liturgy instead.

8. Will the Bishop physically impose hands on each of the candidates?

There is a twofold imposition, or laying on, of hands. The first is a biblical sign, the invocation of the Holy Spirit done in silence before the anointing. The direction (#25) is that the bishop and the concelebrating priests lay hands not by physical contact but by extending both hands over or towards the group of candidates. This is followed by the actual "matter" of the sacrament, the chrismation: "the sacrament of confirmation is conferred through the anointing with chrism on the forehead, which is done by the imposition of the hand (*note the singular*), and through the words, "Receive the seal of the Gift of the Holy Spirit." This is the actual sacramental sign, and the action of anointing is by its nature a laying on of the hand.

9. May the Bishop be assisted by concelebrating priests in the Anointing with Chrism?

Yes, he may; however, Bishop DiLorenzo prefers to be the one to anoint the candidates. The candidates should come up to him one by one accompanied by their sponsors.

10. How should the young person to be confirmed be presented to the Bishop? What about a confirmation name?

While there is a choice, it seems to fit perfectly in the role of the sponsor to introduce the candidate: "Bishop, may I present John Patrick Henry." The USCCB recommends that the original baptismal name be used and reaffirmed. If a candidate chooses a confirmation name as well, it can be used in conjunction with the baptismal name. A **name tag** with the candidate's name in large print will help the Bishop repeat the candidate's name correctly.

11. What about the Sign of Peace given to the confirmed? Does it replace the assembly’s Sign of Peace?

No, it does not. The confirmation of each candidate is affirmed by the Bishop’s offering a sign of peace to each individually. The usual Sign of Peace follows the General Intercessions.

12. What are the candidates responses?

The candidates should be rehearsed in the following responses so as to answer audibly:

- Bishop: “Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit.”
- Candidate: “Amen.”
- Bishop: “Peace be with you.”
- Candidate: “And also with you.”

13. Who reads the Prayer of the Faithful?

Multiple readers of the intercessions should be avoided. If there is a deacon present, it is appropriate for him to read the intercessions.

14. May Confirmations be held in a place other than a church?

While it is preferable that this sacrament be celebrated in a church, it may be done in another place when the number of *confirmandi* makes it necessary.

15. How should the candidates present themselves for the celebration?

Dress should be dignified and in keeping with the dignity of a liturgical celebration. It is essential that the Bishop be able to anoint the candidate on the forehead. Each one should stand close, and perhaps remove glasses to avoid getting oil on them. If the oil runs, it is easiest to wipe the oil with the hands and then rub the excess into the hands.

16. What music should be sung?

The criteria is similar to Sunday Mass: appropriate to the sacramental celebration and the Easter season, theologically sound, beautiful, and singable by all. The acclamations and the Psalm should be sung. Because of the length of the celebration, no Hymn of Praise or Communion Meditation should be sung, though an instrumental may be appropriate.

17. May photographs be taken?

While each parish may have its own policy, parishes should consider designating one or two photographers during the conferral of the sacrament so as to eliminate the need for family members making their way up to the front during the liturgy. Flash photography may also be blinding to those in the sanctuary. The Bishop will be available for parish photographs (or individual if the group is small) in the sanctuary after the liturgy has ended.

For additional questions or support regarding:

- Confirmation preparation, contact Mike School in the Diocesan Office of Youth Ministry.
- Confirmation liturgy, contact Catherine Combi-Donovan in the Diocesan Office of Worship.
- “Called to Faith”, download at <http://intranet.richmonddiocese.org/docs/WFaith2.pdf>.