To Our Brothers and Sisters of the Archdiocese of Seattle

For several years, a number of our priests and laity have requested reconsideration of the age of Confirmation in the Archdiocese of Seattle. Among the reasons that motivated this request were the desire that our youth receive the gift of the Holy Spirit as they transitioned through adolescence into adulthood, the opportunity for recipients to exercise the graces of Confirmation through meaningful Christian ministry during their high school years, and to ensure an increase in confirmed Catholics.

Accordingly, pastoral leaders and catechists were consulted about this change and new Confirmation policies were drafted. These policies were reviewed and approved by the Presbyteral Council with the recommendation that they go into effect for a trial period of one year.

Therefore, with due regard for canon 891 of the Code of Canon Law and the Complementary Norms issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, I hereby promulgate the attached policies on Confirmation as particular law for the Archdiocese of Seattle, ad experimentum, for a period of one year. These policies become effective immediately.

All previous sacramental policies regarding Confirmation are abrogated.

All things to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at the Chancery
this 28th day of October
in the year of our Lord, 2019.

Most Reverend Paul D. Etienne, DD, STL
Archbishop of Seattle

Mary E. Santi
Chancellor
A. INTRODUCTION

The sacrament of Confirmation is first and foremost an act of God’s initiative in giving the candidates the gift of the Holy Spirit who helps them to be more authentic disciples of Jesus by bestowing spiritual gifts. Confirmation is the completion of Christian Initiation, of the candidates’ sharing in Christ’s Paschal Mystery, which culminated in the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Confirmation, then, should be understood in the context of Christian initiation, and not as a method of marking the “coming of age” of a candidate, since the sacrament of confirmation is in fact administered to people from infancy through adulthood (Archbishop J. Peter Sartain, The Age of Confirmation: A Proposal).

Confirmation confers on the baptized an indelible character, the seal of the Lord, and enriches them with the gift of the Holy Spirit which conforms them more closely to Christ, binds them more perfectly to the Church, and gives them grace and strength, as true witnesses of Christ, to spread the Lord’s presence among others and to defend the faith by word and deed1.

The rite itself has a twofold meaning: the laying on of hands is the biblical gesture by which the gift of the Holy Spirit is invoked, while the anointing with chrism and the accompanying prayers express clearly the effects of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit2.

Baptism, the Eucharist, and Confirmation together constitute the “sacraments of Christian initiation,” whose unity must be safeguarded. It must be explained to the faithful that the reception of Confirmation is necessary for the completion of Baptismal grace3.

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1 CCC 1285, citing LG 11; RC, Introduction, 2; ibid. 9. Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures 22: 7: “With oil he anointed your head, your forehead, in the God-given sign of the cross, so that you may become that which is engraved on the seal, ‘a holy thing of the Lord.”

2 Cf. RC 9. Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures 21: 3-4: “After you had come up from the pool of the sacred streams, there was given chrism, the antitype of that with which Christ was anointed, and this is the Holy Spirit. But beware of supposing that this is ordinary ointment. For just as the bread of the Eucharist after the invocation of the Holy Spirit is simple bread no longer, but the body of Christ, so also this ointment is no longer plain ointment, nor, so to speak, common, after the invocation. Further, it is the gracious gift of Christ, and it is made fit for the imparting of his Godhead by the coming of the Holy Spirit. This ointment is symbolically applied to your forehead and to your other senses; while your body is anointed with the visible ointment, your soul is sanctified by the holy and life-giving Spirit. Just as Christ, after his baptism, and the coming upon him of the Holy Spirit, went forth and defeated the adversary, so also with you after holy baptism and the mystical chrism, having put on the panoply of the Holy Spirit, you are to withstand the power of the adversary and defeat him, saying, ‘I am able to do all things in Christ, who strengthens me.”

3 CIC can. 842 §2; CCC 1285, citing RC, Introduction 1. Theophilus of Antioch, Apologia ad Autolycum 1, 12: “Are you unwilling to be anointed with the oil of God? It is on this account that we are called Christians: because we are anointed with the oil of God.”
B. OFFICES AND MINISTRIES

**Parish Community**

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 confirmands⁴.

Since the preparation of candidates for Confirmation is one of the highest responsibilities of the people of God, parish communities are to provide a spirit of welcome, good example and opportunities for their involvement in parish life⁵.

**Pastors**

Pastors should see to it that all the baptized come to the fullness of Christian initiation and are carefully prepared for Confirmation⁶.

Pastors should see to it that the sponsors chosen by the candidates are qualified for the office and fulfill its requirements⁷.

**Catechists**

Catechists assist both the progress of the candidates and the growth of the community. They should take care that their teaching is:

a. filled with the spirit of the Gospel;

b. adapted to the signs and cycles of the liturgical year; and

c. suited to the needs of the candidates⁸.

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⁴ CCC 1309; cf. RC, introduction, 4.
⁵ RC 3.
⁶ RC 3.
⁷ RC 5.
⁸ RCIA 16.
Parents

In the case of children preparing for confirmation, parents, along with pastoral leaders, are to see to it that they are properly instructed about the sacrament and approach it at the appropriate time\(^9\). In fulfilling their role, parents are to:

a. strive to increase a spirit of faith in their children;

b. help their children to prepare to celebrate the sacrament fruitfully; and

c. give expression to their own faith through active participation in and celebration of the sacraments\(^{10}\).

Parents of children who are to be confirmed should be gathered and prepared for the celebration of Confirmation.

a. Parents are to be reminded of their unique and God-given role in the Christian formation of their children. They should have opportunities for personal spiritual preparation, and be given information about practical preparations for their children’s Confirmation through parent formation programs.

b. Parents who are leading a child to Confirmation for the first time are to receive catechesis about the sacrament in order to deepen their understanding and appreciation of Confirmation in the life of the Church and in their own lives.

c. Parents who have previously participated in such programs should be welcomed to take part again.

d. Parents and families with special needs (e.g., family crisis, alienation from the Church) are to receive particular pastoral attention to enable them to participate fruitfully in the celebration of the sacrament.

Candidates whose parents do not participate in parent formation may not for that reason be denied the sacrament of confirmation, which is their right if they are prepared and properly disposed.

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\(^9\) CIC can. 890.  
\(^{10}\) RC 3.
Sponsors

A sponsor should be obtained for each candidate. While one sponsor may serve for two candidates, the practice of having one sponsor for a whole class or for part of a class is not in keeping with the spirit of the Rite of Confirmation[11].

In order to express more clearly the relationship between Baptism and Confirmation, it is desirable to choose as sponsor the one who undertook the same function in baptism[12].

The sponsor is to take care that the person to be confirmed behaves as a true witness of Christ and faithfully fulfills the obligations that come with the sacrament[13].

To be permitted to take on the function of sponsor, a person must

a. be designated by the one who is to receive Confirmation, by his or her parents or the person who takes their place, or, in their absence, by the pastor or minister of the sacrament, and have the aptitude and intention of fulfilling this function[14];

b. have completed the sixteenth year of age, unless the pastor or minister of the sacrament has granted an exception for a just cause[15];

c. be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist and who leads a life of faith in keeping with the function to be taken on[16];

d. not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared[17];

e. not be the father or mother of the one who is to receive the sacrament[18].

A member of an Eastern rite of the Catholic Church may serve as a sponsor for confirmation in the Latin Rite[19].

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[12] CIC can. 893 §2; RC 5; ADW, Rite of Confirmation within Mass, 2007.
[14] CIC can. 874 §1 1o.
[15] CIC can. 874 §1 2o
[16] CIC can. 874 §1 3o.
[17] CIC can. 874 §1 4o.
[18] CIC can. 874 §1 5o.
[19] CIC can. 874 §1 3o; cf. CCEO can. 685 §1 2o.
Ministers of the Sacrament

The ordinary minister of confirmation is a bishop; a priest provided with this faculty in virtue of universal law or the special grant of the competent authority also confers this sacrament validly\(^20\).

The Archbishop will administer confirmation personally or will take care that another bishop administers it.

A priest has the faculty from the law itself to confirm in the following circumstances:

a. when he baptizes a person who is no longer an infant\(^21\);

b. when he receives a baptized non-Catholic into the full communion of the Catholic Church\(^22\);

c. when he readmits to communion a baptized person who has been an apostate from (i.e., had totally repudiated) the Christian faith\(^23\);

d. when he welcomes again to Catholic practice a baptized Catholic who has, without fault, been instructed in or adhered to a non-Catholic religion\(^24\); or

e. when a baptized Catholic, even an infant, is in danger of death\(^25\).

A priest does not have the faculty to confirm:

a. a baptized Catholic who has adhered to a non-Catholic church or ecclesial community, but did not defect from the Catholic faith by a formal act\(^26\); or

b. a baptized Catholic who simply never put the Catholic faith into practice\(^27\).

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\(^{20}\) CIC can. 882; cf. can. 883 1o-3o. A priest of the Latin Church must have the faculty to confirm either from the law itself or by a special grant of the competent authority for the validity of the sacrament, but a priest of an Eastern Catholic Church always validly administers the sacrament to all the Christian faithful of any Church sui iuris, including the Latin Church. See CCEO can. 696 §1; IALP 50.

\(^{21}\) CIC can. 883 2o.

\(^{22}\) CIC can. 883 2o. This category includes persons who were baptized as Catholics but who left the Church by a formal act. See also ADW, Liturgical Norms and Policies, 2010, 2.20.5.b and 2.32.1.b and its note.

\(^{23}\) Pontifical Commission for the Interpretation of the Decrees of the Second Vatican Council, in BCLN December 1975; NSC 28 a. Apostasy is defined in CIC can. 751 as “the total repudiation of the Christian faith.” An apostate incurs a latae sententiae excommunication (can. 1364 §1). Note that the remission of an excommunication is separate from reconciliation through sacramental confession. However, one cannot incur a penalty if the offense is not imputable (see CIC can. 1321-1330).

\(^{24}\) NSC 28 b. If a person has defected by a formal act, he or she comes under 4.7.3.b.

\(^{25}\) CIC cann. 883 3o, 889 §2. The chrism used in the sacrament of confirmation must be consecrated by a bishop even if a priest administers the sacrament. CIC can. 880 §2.

\(^{26}\) If the person defected from the Church by a formal act, see ADW, Liturgical Norms and Policies, 2010, 4.7.3.b. cf. 2.20.5.b and 2.32.1.b and its note. This category of persons is not included in NSC 28. Schism is defined in CIC can. 751 as “the refusal of submission to the Supreme Pontiff or of communion with the members of the Church subject to him.” A schismatic incurs a latae sententiae excommunication (can. 1364 §1). Note that the remission of an excommunication is separate from reconciliation through sacramental confession. However, one cannot incur a penalty if the offense is not imputable (see cann. 1321-1330).

\(^{27}\) NSC 28 c.
In these cases, the priest must request the faculty to confirm from the Archbishop. This delegation is necessary for the validity of the sacrament\textsuperscript{28}.

In the circumstances listed above, the priest who possesses this faculty to confirm must use it for the sake of those in whose favor the faculty was granted\textsuperscript{29}. This applies in particular to situations where the priest has administered the sacrament of baptism to an adult; he must immediately confer the sacrament of confirmation as well\textsuperscript{30}.

If necessity requires it, the Archbishop can grant the faculty to one or more specific priests, who are to administer this sacrament\textsuperscript{31}.

For a good reason a priest may request from the Archbishop the faculty to confirm baptized Catholics who are under his parochial care\textsuperscript{32}.

\textbf{Candidates}

Every baptized person not yet confirmed and only such a person is capable of receiving Confirmation\textsuperscript{33}.

To receive Confirmation licitly outside the danger of death requires that a person who has the use of reason be suitably instructed, properly disposed, and able to renew the baptismal promises\textsuperscript{34}.

Persons with disabilities (includes intellectual, developmental, physical, and mental health) are to receive formation and be presented for confirmation along with their age peers, seeking a degree of understanding appropriate to their individual condition.

Persons who are intellectually disabled, have reached the normal age, and are receiving formation within the community according to their capacity, as is their right, are to be confirmed if they express some disposition to receive the sacrament. In cases of profound disability, there should be no hesitation about confirming the child with disabilities.
Children with disabilities should be included in the parish sacramental celebrations according to their capacity (see Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities, General Principle, 3.)

The faithful are obliged to receive this sacrament at the proper time. Parents and pastors of souls, especially pastors of parishes, are to take care that the faithful are properly instructed to receive the sacrament and come to it at the appropriate time.

In the Archdiocese of Seattle, young Catholics who were baptized as infants are typically confirmed in the seventh grade.

For pastoral reasons, a child may be confirmed at a younger age if he or she has the use of reason, is sufficiently instructed, properly disposed, and is able to renew their baptismal promises:

- In this case, the candidate must write a letter to the pastor stating their desire to be confirmed so that the pastor can recommend the candidate to the bishop for Confirmation.

Non-Catholic children who have reached catechetical age are to be confirmed at the time of their baptism or reception into full communion, even when this occurs before the normal age mentioned above.

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35 CIC can. 890.
36 cf. CIC can. 891; NCCB complementary norm on CIC can. 891.
37 CIC, c. 889 §2
C. FORMATION

Formation of Candidates

The time of formation is understood to include the whole period following baptism.

This long-term formation is to help the candidates:

a. to develop a sufficient effective relationship with the Christian community;

b. to give the witness of a Christian life;

c. to exercise the Christian apostolate; and

d. to develop a genuine desire to participate in the Eucharist and the sacramental life of the Church.  

Candidates Who Are of the Normal Age for Confirmation (7th Grade)

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.

From the age of reason, children should be participating in the catechetical program provided by the parish or Catholic school to assist and augment the formation that they receive within their families.

Catechesis in the Catholic faith, teachings and moral life is to be comprehensive, yet accommodated to the various stages of children’s growth as faithful disciples of the Lord.

The doctrinal elements of such catechesis must always reflect the teaching of the Church in its worship and its creeds. In preparing for their role, catechists are to rely on catechetical materials approved by the USCCB and other Archdiocesan approved catechetical materials.

Candidates may be encouraged to adopt a saint’s name or learn more about their baptismal name if they are named after a saint.

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38 RC 12
39 CCC 1309.
Opportunities for Christian ministry/Christian service should occur within the context of the apostolic activity of the family and the life of the parish.

In the case of children who have not participated consistently in such catechetical programs, the pastor should consult with catechists and parents and determine the type of preparation required. As baptized persons, such children may not be held back from Confirmation if they seek it at the proper time and fulfill the requirements.

Candidates Who Are Beyond the Normal Age of Confirmation

In the case of baptized Catholics who are beyond the normal age for confirmation, the religious formation of the individual candidates must be considered. Those who have been living a Catholic life and have an understanding of faith appropriate to their age may be presented for confirmation after a period of spiritual discernment. For those who have been uncatechized, the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, Part II, Chapter 4, is to be followed.

Such candidates should be presented for Confirmation:

a. when the Archbishop or confirming bishop comes to the parish to celebrate the sacrament;

b. when the Archbishop or confirming bishop is confirming in a neighboring parish, in which case the pastor of the candidate should make arrangements with the pastor of the other parish.

For the uncatechized candidates who have been associated with the catechumenate process, if it seems advisable, the pastor may request from the Archbishop the faculty to confirm them at the Easter Vigil. This faculty must be requested in writing and is required for the validity of the sacrament.

When a pastor judges that there are serious reasons to do so, he may request from the Archbishop the faculty to confirm a particular candidate at some other time. This faculty must be requested in writing and is required for the validity of the sacrament.

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40 CIC cann. 843, 885 §1, 889 §2. See also ADW, Liturgical Norms and Policies, 2010, 4.8.2.

D. SACRAMENTAL CATECHETICAL PREPARATION

Every parish and faith community in the Archdiocese of Seattle is to make provisions that adequate catechesis for Confirmation take place. Catechetical preparation is to occur over a suitable length of time as determined by the pastor.

Specific preparation of the candidates for Confirmation is to occur in three stages:

Culmination for the Rite of Christian Initiation

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<tr>
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<th>Grade Range</th>
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<th>Parish Community and Family</th>
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Parish Community and Family
- Participation in the Sacraments
- Cultivation of life of prayer
- Engagement in parish life
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<td>consecrated life)</td>
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<td>Learning to pray with the Holy Spirit</td>
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*See approved list of catechetical materials, Appendix 1*

Candidates within the normal age of Confirmation are not required to write letters requesting the sacrament of Confirmation. For parishes who wish to continue this tradition, letters of request should be addressed and sent to the pastor.

Parish Community and Family

- Participation in the Sacraments
- Cultivation of life of prayer (should include a retreat with the availability of the Sacrament of Reconciliation)
- Engagement in parish life (should include meaningful pastoral ministry)
Appendix 1:

Catechetical resources approved by the USCCB / Archdiocese of Seattle

**Middle School Confirmation Programs**

- **St. Mary’s Press Anointed in the Spirit** ©2010
- **Sadlier Belive-Celebrate-Live Confirmation** (both junior high/high school) **Ages 12-15** ©2017
- **Sadlier Inspired by the Spirit** (both junior high/high school) ©2012
- **Our Sunday Visitor Call to Celebrate for Younger Adolescents** **Ages 12-14** ©2008
- **Our Sunday Visitor Encounter with Christ** (NEW) More information to come
- **Dynamic Catholic Decision Point** (geared for over the age of 12) **Ages 12-16** ©2014
- **Ignatius Press Youcat & Image of God Confirmation Resource** (both junior high/high school) ©2014
- **Sophia Institute Sealed in Fire** (junior high) © 2016

**High School Confirmation Programs**

- **St. Mary’s Press Called to Mercy** ©2018
- **St. Mary’s Press Anointed in the Spirit** ©2011
- **St. Mary’s Press Confirmed in a Faithful Community** ©2006
- **Loyola Press Confirmed in the Spirit** ©2014
- **Our Sunday Visitor Call to Celebrate for Older Adolescents** **Ages 15-18** ©2008
- **Ave Maria Press Send Out Your Spirit** ©2010
- **RCL Benziger Confirmation** ©2007
- **Ascension Press Chosen** ©2014
- **Lifeteen One8** ©2013
Catechetical Resources in Spanish

**Confirmación** RCL Benziger S&TM ©2014

**Confirmación: Inspirados por el Espíritu** William H. Sadlier, Inc. S/P&TM/CM ©2013

**Creer • Celebrar • Vivir Confirmación** William H. Sadlier, Inc. ©2018 *(not on conformity list but it is an approved publisher and this fits with grade 7, ages 12-15)*

**Confirmados en el Espíritu (7-9)** Loyola Press S/P&TM/CM ©2007, 2013


**Un llamado a celebrar: la Confirmación** Harcourt (OSV Curriculum) S/P&TM/CM ©2008

Catechetical Resources in Vietnamese

**The Spirit Sets Us Free: Confirmation Prep for Youth** Vietnamese Catechetical Community U.S.A. S/P ©2001

Vocations Resources

Seattle Vocations: [www.seattlevocations.com](http://www.seattlevocations.com)


Archdiocese of Seattle Vocation Prayer: [http://seattlevocations.com/resources](http://seattlevocations.com/resources)


Information about the Priesthood in the Archdiocese of Seattle: [http://seattlevocations.com/priesthood](http://seattlevocations.com/priesthood)


Information about Marriage in the Archdiocese of Seattle: [https://marriagefamilylife.seattlearchdiocese.org/](https://marriagefamilylife.seattlearchdiocese.org/)