

WHY DO I HAVE TO PREPARE MY CHILD FOR THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION?

1. What is the Sacrament of Confirmation?

Confirmation is one of the three Sacraments of Initiation. It joins the baptized more closely to the Church, strengthens them with the outpouring of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, makes them witnesses of Christ, and gives special help to spread and defend the faith.

2. Why are children who already attend Catholic School required to participate in Confirmation Preparation at the parish?

The parish as the living and permanent environment for growth in faith, is charged by the Church to catechize its members, a process that takes part in life-long, on-going formation. As Catholics, we celebrate sacraments as signs of God's love and stages of a person's journey toward communion with the Trinity.

“In accordance with the norms established by the diocesan bishop, the pastor is to make particular provision: that children are properly prepared for the reception of the sacraments of Penance, Most Holy Eucharist, and Confirmation by means of catechetical formation given over an appropriate period of time.” Code of Canon Law #7777

Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the people of God (parish) to prepare the Baptized for Confirmation. (Rite of Confirmation, Introduction #3) The current challenge is not only providing quality immediate sacramental preparation, but also helping the adolescent renew his/her own commitment to Baptismal grace through an active life of Christian discipleship.

3. Why is Confirmation celebrated at different age level in other Parishes?

In the early Church, Christian Initiation was one event. Adults or children were baptized, anointed or had hands laid upon them, and then participated in the Eucharist all at the same celebration. For a variety of reasons, this practice gradually became separated into three different events and the original event of initiation developed into Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. In 1910 Pope Pius X recommended in his encyclical *Quam Singularem* that the first Communion of children should not be deferred too long after they had reached the age of reason. Previous to his urging, children who had been baptized as infants usually celebrated First Communion in the early teen years and Confirmation usually was celebrated at an earlier age. However, once children began to fully participate in the Eucharist at an earlier age, the age for Confirmation was varied and not necessarily tied to reception of First Communion.

Dioceses and parishes throughout Canada have adopted one of the following practices...

- * Celebrating Confirmation prior to First Communion
- * Celebrating the Sacrament of Confirmation within the same Eucharistic celebration that children celebrate their First Communion
- * Celebrating at a different time but before First Communion
- * **Celebrating Confirmation sometime after First Communion.**

All of these practices are approved by the Bishops Conference who has given approval to the celebration of Confirmation for children baptized as infants anytime after the age of 7. **In our Parish we have chosen Confirmation at the Grade 7 level.**

4. What is the role of the family in the preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation?

When infants are presented to the Church for Baptism, family members are reminded that they have the responsibility of “raising them in the practice of the faith” (The Rite of Baptism for Children). This obligation and privilege extends to sacramental preparation. The fact that family members know the Confirmation candidate better than anyone else, places them in the best position to help the young person uncover the mystery of the Sacrament of Confirmation with words and experiences he or she will understand. No matter what else is done in the parish or school or with the sponsor to prepare candidates, it is only as effective as the support received in the family.

Our book, “CHRIST OUR LIFE - Confirmed in the Spirit”: Confirmation provides you with ideas and suggestions to do with the candidate using the features in the Candidate Book and homework from the catechist. Parents are invited to participate in special celebrations and asked to assist with retreats and service projects.

5. Will candidates need a sponsor for Confirmation?

Yes, candidates will need to select a sponsor. The Church does have specific qualifications for a sponsor. They are found in Canon Law, which is the official law of the Church and they include the following:

- * be designated by the candidate, or the parents or person who takes the place of parents, or in their absence by the pastor or minister
- * have the ability and intention of fulfilling the function of sponsor, which includes following through with the candidate after the celebration of the sacrament
- * be 16 years old
- * be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the Eucharist and who leads a life of faith in keeping with the function to be taken on as sponsor

6. What are the responsibilities of the sponsor?

The responsibilities of the Confirmation sponsor or mentor who accompanies the candidate throughout the preparation process is multifaceted. It includes affirming the strengths of the candidate and pointing out ways he or she can grow and become better in the practice of faith. It may involve some explanation of points brought up in the candidates’ sessions. At times it may involve guidance and active listening. It is important that the sponsor be an example of how to live a life of faith. Sponsors should be people who like being Catholic, are willing to share their faith journey, and who will actively listen to their candidate’s thoughts and feelings about their journey of faith. The sponsor “brings the candidates to receive the sacrament, presents them to the minister for anointing, and will later help them to fulfill their baptismal promises faithfully under the influence of the Holy Spirit whom they have received.” (Rite of Confirmation, par 5)

AT OUR LADY OF SORROWS PARISH, THE SPONSOR:

- may attend some of the catechetical sessions or participate in retreats and service projects with the candidate
- is asked to spend time with the candidate doing the activities and dialogue, which are found in the features in the Candidate Book
- is asked to share how the teachings and practices of the Church relate to your life on a daily basis
- should, if possible, attend the Candidate/Parent/Sponsor Sessions in the fall and winter, the Confirmation Rehearsal the night of the Rite, and the Confirmation Rite itself. If it is not possible for the sponsor to attend any of the above, another confirmed adult may step in as a substitute for the sponsor.

7. Is it important for Confirmation candidates to be involved in Service Projects?

Candidates for Confirmation are involved in the process of initiation. A full catechesis for initiation calls for participation in apostolic witness and service. So, too, does the call to discipleship received in Baptism, and service is a way of life for the disciple who is committed to participating in the kingdom of God.

Intentional service is essential for young people preparing for Confirmation because through it candidates get a feeling and experience of service as a normal way of life for the fully initiated Christian.

Candidates are expected to participate in service with their small group and the larger Confirmation class. The service project will take place outside a previously-scheduled class so as to not cut into another part of the candidates' schedule.

8. Will candidates choose a Confirmation Name?

Candidates are given the option to choose a separate Confirmation name; however, there is no obligation to select a Confirmation name that is different from the name given at Baptism. If a new name is taken, it can be symbolic of a new or deeper stage in the candidate's faith life and an occasion for the candidate to reflect on how he or she wants to witness to the power of the Holy Spirit in his or her life. We encourage candidates to choose the name of a saint or holy person they admire and want to imitate and you will find many names on the "Favourite Links" page on our Parish Website - www.sorrowspetawawa.com and link to the site "Saints and Angels - for Confirmation class".