



CONFIRMATION PLANNING GUIDELINES

I. THE LITURGY

The Eucharistic Celebration: The usual guidelines for concelebrated Mass are to be followed. On Solemnities, the Mass of the Day with its proper readings is used. Please note that the weekdays of Easter Week are Solemnities, and the Mass of the Day must be used. The same is true of the Sundays of Advent, Lent and the Easter season. On the other days, including the Sundays of Ordinary Time, the Ritual Mass for Confirmation should be used along with readings from the Ritual Mass.

Sacred Scripture for the year's Confirmation cycle is chosen by the Archbishop. This allows him to have a consistent theme for the cycle which can be aligned to the pastoral priorities of the Archdiocese; giving a uniformed message to our young people. These readings together with music suggestions are available from the Office of Divine Worship.

If there is a deacon, he reads the gospel. If a deacon is not present, the pastor will ordinarily read the gospel. At the conclusion of the gospel, the pastor presents the candidates by name (or he may introduce another ecclesial minister to present the candidates). Each candidate should stand, and remain standing until all the candidates have been introduced. The bishop gives the homily after the presentation of the candidates.

Administration of the Sacrament: Follows the homily [cf. Rite of Confirmation, #25]. The anointing takes place with the bishop standing. The candidates approach in a line, one at a time with their sponsor behind them, and remain standing. The sponsor should place his or her right hand on the shoulder of the candidate. Please remind the candidates to stand close to the confirming bishop, so he does not have to reach for the candidate.

The candidate will ordinarily have the name of a patron saint. The confirmation name should be printed on a card and held for the bishop to see by the sponsor or attendant to the bishop. Additionally, the name is to be spoken directly to the bishop by the candidate or sponsor. The card is helpful because some speak the name very softly.

The bishop imposes his hand, and anoints the candidate's forehead with Chrism in one gesture. The candidate should respond "Amen" at the end of the anointing (after the bishop says, "Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit."). The bishop will touch the newly confirmed on the left shoulder and say "Peace be with you." The response to this greeting of peace is, "And with your Spirit." [cf. Rite of Confirmation, #26, 27] Please practice these responses with the candidates.

During the anointing, if music is provided, it should be of a meditative character and of low volume so that the dialog between the bishop and the candidate can be heard.

The candidates should remain seated in their pews until it is time for their row to approach the bishop. This allows the congregation to witness the administration of the Sacrament.

At the conclusion of the Administration of the Sacrament the bishop will wash his hands at the chair. Please provide lemon, water and a towel for this. There is no need to provide bread for this washing of the bishop's hands. The General Intercessions will follow in this manner:

- The bishop introduces and concludes them. Whoever leads the petitions should wait for the bishop's introduction.
- The deacon, if present, reads the petitions. If a deacon is not present, a lector, or more than one person reads the petitions. Confirmandi may be designated for this purpose. They should be instructed to remain in place until the bishop's concluding prayer is finished.

Continuation of Mass: Concelebrated Mass continues in the usual manner. These points, however, may be noted:

- The vessels used for chalices, patens and ciboria are to be of precious metal. No glass or ceramic vessels are to be used.
- The concelebrants should not come around the altar until the conclusion of the Prayer over the Gifts.
- Concelebrants should observe the designation of parts in the Eucharistic Prayer. The prayers said in unison should be said "*submissa voce*," (inaudibly in a low voice.)
- The bishop announces the "Mystery of Faith."

- The pastor should assist in the distribution of Communion to the candidates and the congregation. Communion under both species should be given at least to the candidates and sponsors (unless there is a good reason for not doing so).
- No other gifts should accompany the offerings of bread and wine, unless a regular Sunday collection has been taken.
- Other priests should assist in the distribution of Communion as needed. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may be used only if there is an insufficient number of priests and deacons available for this purpose.
- Since the reception of Communion by the priest is integral to the Rite of Mass and has important significance for the theology of sacrifice, Catholic practice is to wait until after the principal celebrant has received from the chalice before distributing Communion to deacons, Extraordinary Ministers, or the Confirmandi.
- There is a Solemn Blessing at the conclusion of the Confirmation Mass, and the candidates should be instructed to respond “Amen” at the conclusion of each petition.
- The bishop should be informed if there is to be a group photo after the Mass. This should take place only after the ministers have left the altar in the procession at the end of Mass. No individual photos with the bishop will be taken in the church but should be reserved for the reception after Mass. One reason for this is so that the bishop can more freely visit with the newly confirmed and their families. Too often, by the time the bishop reaches the reception, most of the people have departed.

II. LITURGICAL MINISTERS

Concelebrants: Should be vested in alb, stole, and chasuble (if available) of proper color. All priests present should concelebrate Mass with the bishop. The color red is used for the Ritual Mass of Confirmation.

Deacons: Whenever possible, it is highly desirable that one or two deacons assist at the Mass. If present, a deacon proclaims the Gospel and reads the General Intercessions, in addition to the other prescribed duties for a deacon at Mass.

Servers: It is helpful to have five servers: a cross bearer, two acolytes, who also act as Mass servers, a mitre bearer and a crozier bearer. If incense is to be used, a thurifer is helpful. If this is not possible, please have at least three servers.

Lectors: Fully initiated members of the Church should do the readings. Established and experienced parish lectors are most appropriate, since they are most prepared to publicly proclaim the Scriptures.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion: May be used only if there is an insufficient number of concelebrating priests and deacons present. It is preferable that Holy Communion be distributed under both forms. See note above regarding the materials to be used for sacred vessels.

The Bishop: Will bring the confirmation ritual book, miter and crozier. If the oils have been prominently displayed in the church, these might be used. The bishop may prefer to use the oil stock he brings with him. He will choose the Proper Prayers of the Ritual Mass from the Roman Missal (A,B,orC).

Master of Ceremonies: Archbishop Sample will usually have a Master of Ceremonies with him. The MC will coordinate the liturgy and instruct the ministers of the altar.

III. ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Ecclesial Event: The celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation, as any episcopal visitation, is a celebration for the entire vicariate or cluster of neighboring parishes. It is a sign of unity with the Archdiocese and the Church universal.

Liturgical Music: True sacred music and congregational singing would be expected and customary. The appropriate parts of the Mass should be sung. The music should reflect the liturgical season during which the celebration takes place and be of sound theology and artistic quality as truly sacred music. To be especially avoided are “styles” of music not in keeping with the sacred character of the celebration. Put simply, not all “styles” of music and instrumentation are suitable for the sacred liturgy. Some music suggestions will be provided by the Office of Divine Worship.

Environment and Art: Appropriate decoration and floral design should reflect the liturgical season, the nature of the celebration and the principles of the U.S. Bishops’ Committee on Divine Worship document “Built of Living Stones.”

Vesture of Candidates: The use and decoration of “confirmation stoles” for the candidates is not allowed. The stole is a sign of ordination. Direction should be given candidates about suitable attire. Neatness, cleanliness and modesty cannot be presumed. Bare shoulders and short dresses are not appropriate.

Sanctuary Arrangement: The presidential chair should be placed in a position that can best be seen by the congregation.

Credence Table: The following items should be available: a pitcher of water, basin, towels, and lemon or soap. A separate lavabo dish may be helpful for the Mass, unless the basin used after the Confirmation rite is able to be cleaned in the meantime.

Confirmandi Letters: A letter is often written from each candidate preparing to receive Confirmation. The letter is not a requirement to receive this sacrament but is often helpful for the student to express their desire to receive the sacrament. If a letter is written, it is sometimes helpful for the bishop to see the letters well before the celebration of the Sacrament.

IV. MATTERS OF HOSPITALITY

Meals and Lodging: The offer of a simple meal appropriate to the time of day is greatly appreciated. This is an opportunity for the pastor, his staff members and/or visiting priests to share in fellowship with the visiting bishop. If a meal precedes the ceremony, please do not schedule it more than 1½ hours before the start of Confirmation. Please extend a phone call of invitation to the bishop's office if there is a dinner planned with the time and location.

If the celebration and dinner are scheduled for an evening, and the distance from the bishop's residence is great, the bishop may wish to stay overnight at the rectory. Please discuss this with his office.

Photos after the Ceremony: The bishop will normally stay after the ceremony to greet those confirmed, sponsors, family members and parishioners. Whether this is in a reception atmosphere, or informal, it is a good time for photographs with the bishop. Please designate specific instructions and an individual to coordinate photo opportunities with the bishop. Organize the timeline of this group photo ahead of time so that the confirmandi know where to be positioned for the group and individual photos. Do not arrange for individual photos with the newly confirmed in the church after the ceremony. Reserve these for the reception so that the bishop can also visit with the people.

Addendum: Additions to the already lengthy ritual of Confirmation, such as candle lighting ceremonies, distribution of certificates and witness talks by the candidates are not allowed.

The Confirmation Rite itself is rich and meaningful. The renewal of baptismal promises, the prayer of blessing and the individual anointings together convey the unique significance of the gift of the Holy Spirit imparted to the newly confirmed.

The special celebration of the Holy Eucharist during which Confirmation takes place also provides the participants with a marvelous opportunity for renewed faith and inspiration. Careful selection of music, readings and prayers are encouraged. If any addition is to be made to the ceremony permission from the bishop should be requested before the actual day of Confirmation. Please direct any questions to the Office of the Archbishop or the Office of Divine Worship.