

FAQ Sheet for Confirmation and the Bishop's Requirements

What is Confirmation?

Confirmation is one of the three sacraments of Christian Initiation – Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. It is intimately related to Baptism and often called the seal of the Holy Spirit. In Confirmation we celebrate the strengthening of the Holy Spirit as we go forward to live Christian lives as witnesses to Christ and work to build up the kingdom of God and the body of Christ, his church. Confirmation when removed from Baptism, as in the Latin Rite or Roman Catholicism, is about celebrating the spiritual transformation that occurs as one matures in their faith life and begins to walk the road of discipleship. That road is a life long journey and the Confirmandi is only just finished their initiation into a life of formation as a disciple of Christ. Looked at from this perspective, Confirmation is certainly not about graduation or the end of formation. Confirmation is also not some “adult choice” for being Catholic.

Why do I need a sponsor other than my parents to be Confirmed?

Because you are still an initiate into the Catholic Christian community. Someone, a practicing and fully initiated member of the Catholic community, needs to attest to your integrity and readiness to undertake the life of a disciple of Christ. To know how well integrated your values are to who you are as a person (integrity) a sponsor ideally will have spent time with you in prayer and discussions about God, religion, and church. A sponsor should also guide you in your service to others and the community through involvement with you at church. To do this a sponsor should spend much more than mere quality time with you as you prepare to become a full member of the Catholic Christian community. While parents can and do fill these roles, sponsors are also symbol and sign in the sacrament of Confirmation. They agree to be responsible for you not only on their behalf but as symbol of the responsibility that the entire community took for you when you were Baptized. Your soul's spiritual formation is much too important to be left to any one or two people. It takes an entire community to raise a Christian.

Why does the Bishop set the requirements?

The Bishop is the ordinary minister of Confirmation. That means that under normal circumstances he will be the person to determine how, when, and who will be Confirmed. The Bishop does not do this on a whim. He knows the tradition of the Church Universal and the state of the Local Church – in this case the Diocese of Superior. In the Bishop's role as the pastor of souls for his church he determines what guidelines best suits the spiritual needs of those whose spiritual formation has been entrusted to him. The current guidelines in Superior were set by the previous two Bishops. The current Bishop may or may not decide to change them. Because this is a serious matter to consider he will, in all likelihood, take a good deal of time before determining whether or not to make any changes to the guidelines for Confirmation.

Why do I have to have a Confirmation interview?

It is an opportunity for the leader of the Confirmation process or the Pastor to get to know you personally and to get a feel for where the Confirmation process is at in the local parish. Each year we have about 70 to 80 teens to be Confirmed. It is impossible for the leader of that process or the Pastor to know each person. The interview is a time for you to note any concerns and questions that you might have regarding where you are in the process that need to be pastorally addressed. It is also a time for you to feedback any experiences that were particularly beneficial or not helpful to you in the process.

Why do we have to do 30 hours of documented service?

Service is the action of Christian life. That may seem obvious when you read the gospels but there is a difference between reading about a soup kitchen and working on a serving line at a soup kitchen. Doing service has become a part of many high schools' requirements for graduation. They understand that service is a component of being a good citizen – something that is a goal of many school systems. In the Christian community service to others is not an option, it is a responsibility. Up to high school you have not had many opportunities to participate on your own in this aspect of Christian life. Service is a habit. Studies show that somewhere between 25 and 30 hours is where a service "attitude" is developed that remains a part of the person for the rest of their life.

Why do I have to make a Confirmation Retreat?

We live in a plugged-in global world to which many of us are connected 24/7. There is precious little time to conscientiously reflect on what we have done or on what we plan to do. Contemplation and reflection are the gifts of a retreat experience. Retreats are a time for us to get away from the day to day, quiet down, pray, and reflect about what we are doing with our lives and where God is active in them. Retreats that teens participate in are usually guided and have structured activities that lead to reflection. Because Confirmation is a sacrament, Confirmation retreats generally are grounded in sacramental theology and action. Catholic Confirmation retreats generally reflect on our personal and shared experience of the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, and Reconciliation. Since Agape TEC (Catholic) is similarly grounded with these same sacramental pieces it is an option for a Confirmation retreat. Because United TEC (non-denominational) does not have these sacramental understandings it is not an option for a Confirmation retreat.

Why do I have to write a letter of intent to the Bishop?

One of the last things you are asked to do is to write a letter to the Bishop of Superior requesting to receive the sacrament of Confirmation. The letter should state your intent to be Confirmed and the reason you want to be Confirmed. Since you are well past the age of reason this letter is a statement of your free will to be Confirmed. After completing the preparation process the final choice of Confirmation is yours not your parents, grandparents, or anyone else. Are you ready with the help of the Holy Spirit to begin a life of discipleship as a steward of gifts God has freely given to you? Are you ready under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to share those gifts with the community of believers, the church, and the broader world in which we live?

Got other questions?

Ask your small group catechist! They are a wealth of information!