

Confirmation

The Sacramental Guidelines suggest four to six sessions of preparation within the parish.

These sessions would be of three main types:

- 1. Information sessions – initial meetings and rehearsals**
- 2. Catechetical sessions – for teaching the faith**
- 3. Liturgical sessions – celebration of minor rites such as the Rite of Enrollment**

Most likely, one information session, one liturgical practice session, and two to four catechetical sessions would suffice.

An outline of the three kinds of sessions follows. Staff from the Catholic School and parents may be invited to be involved in any of these sessions as they are invited to share their gifts and to witness to the continuity of care in the Church between home, parish, and Catholic School.

- 1. Information Sessions** – to welcome, encourage, organize, and catechize

An initial information session:

- may take place with parents only or, more likely, parents and their children
- could include a DVD (some excellent resources available through the diocesan library) or personal presentation such as a witness talk from other parents
- should lay out the dates and times of future meetings, and the purpose of these meetings
- could be a time of gathering the necessary information, such as baptismal certificates

A rehearsal session

- to prepare for the liturgy itself
- may include reading practise or organization of seating or any other details which could be practised
- may include practise of responses or songs

2. Catechetical Sessions – to teach directly regarding the sacrament to be received or some aspect of the faith related specifically to the sacrament; to give children the information necessary to allow them to be fully aware of the meaning of and participating in the sacrament they are to receive so as to be open to the fullness of God's grace

- Catechetical sessions for young people (aged 11 and 12) should take into account their increased ability to participate, to reflect, and to question. This means, thinking about:
 - i. including large group and small group activities, and opportunities for young people to discuss and ask questions
 - ii. incorporating skits or other creative activities
 - iii. encouraging young people to see the role of their family in preparing them so far – this needs to be an opportunity for reflection, not judgement – a young person who has had little formation at home needs to be assured that they are capable of beginning a life of prayer at any age
 - iv. encouraging young people to take age appropriate responsibility for their continued faith journey
 - v. encouraging students in the Catholic School System to reflect on their catechesis in school as part of their ongoing formation

- catechesis for Confirmation may include:
 - i. teaching about the Gifts of the Holy Spirit and the fruits of the Spirit
 - ii. the meaning of the anointing with Chrism or the reason for the laying on of hands
 - iii. an exploration of the Creed
 - iv. an exploration of the link between Baptism and Confirmation
 - v. a reflection on how the gifts of the Spirit received in Confirmation prepare us to live a lifetime of Christian witness

- Catechetical sessions may not only be “classes”. Other activities may include:
 - i. a **church tour** to familiarize children with the symbols, art, and architecture of their parish and their meaning
 - ii. a **retreat** to provide a time and space for reflection on the mystery of Confirmation. May be with parents and children or children only, and may take place within a regular school day (as a class trip organized with the school in advance) or on an evening or weekend

Some catechetical sessions may include the participation of parents. Parishes may have parents and children come together for a session but provide separate catechesis to each group by having children attend a church tour, for example, while parents have time on their own to reflect on their role in the faith life of their child.

- 3. Liturgical sessions** – the Rite of Enrollment would take place within a regular Sunday Mass but a celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation could be offered specially for the confirmandi or families could be made aware of the opportunity for Reconciliation at a regularly scheduled time in the parish
- **The Rite of Enrollment** – a supplementary rite to the Rite of Confirmation which allows young people to declare their intent to be confirmed by signing their names and declaring their commitment before the congregation
 - **A Celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation** – to provide the opportunity to children (and their families) to receive the sacrament of reconciliation as part of their formation and preparation

For information on how to host an intergenerational session, how to plan a parish retreat for children, or for assistance in choosing resources or training catechetical volunteers, please contact Anne Jamieson in the Catechesis Office 905-528-7988, ext. 2251.

Recommended Resources

Print:

“Confirmed in the Spirit” – Loyola Press. A solid catechetical resource. Very full and detailed information in 8 chapters. Lots of material. Comes with a beautiful journal that can provide opportunity for personal reflection as well as group discussion.

There are Catechist Guides and Director Guides for the *“Confirmed in the Spirit”* program available as well. The Director’s Guide provides the outline of a complete Confirmation Retreat based on the material of the program.

“Alive in the Spirit” – Novalis. A parish Confirmation program designed to be presented over 6 sessions. (Could easily be presented as 2 chapters a session and completed in 3 meetings.) A leader’s guide is also available.

Catholic Parent Know-How Series – *“Preparing Your Child for Confirmation”*. – an 8-page colour magazine with Scripture, FAQ, and tips to help parents be the teachers of faith for their children

DVD (The following are all available through our diocesan library):

“Come and See: Ritual Matters” or *“Your Role at Mass”* – Loyola Press – 10 min. and 40 min. segments. Any of the segments on this fantastic DVD makes a great introduction to any parent meeting for any Sacramental Prep, or good catechesis for parents and Confirmandi or Confirmandi alone.

“Call to Celebrate Confirmation” – suitable for parents alone or parents and children – 30 min. – personal witness of parents mixed with pastoral reflection of priest and then further theological reflection and answering FAQ’s with Fr. Paul Turner (Note: you may choose to skip the opening sequence of music as it may not be appealing to most youth)

“Sacraments: God’s Amazing Grace” – Oblate Media. 90 min. DVD but can be used in segments. Opening part on Sacraments of Initiation is only 28 min. Good for use with students alone or with their parents.

Three options for Sacramental Preparation for Confirmation follow depending on the various circumstances of the Parish:

- A – Parish with no Catholic School
- B – Parish with a single Catholic School
- C – Parish with multiple Catholic Schools

Option A

Parish Situation: No Catholic School or majority of children not in Catholic School

Implications:

Contact of children needs to happen primarily through parish communications – bulletin/website – could happen with assistance of public school – ie. Announcement on their bulletin board

Foundational catechesis is not supported through school so parish offerings and/or support in and through the home becomes that much more important

Options for foundational, ongoing catechesis:

Catechetical Correspondence Courses – can have a parish-based catechist or a more traditional Canada Post correspondence catechist – orientation and training available through the Catechesis Office

Some parishes offer ongoing classes – where parishes use the Catechetical Correspondence Course materials the Catechesis Office can provide resources and training for recommended use

Immediate Prep through the Parish - Practical matters:

Initial parish meeting may be offered as a choice of two or three sessions and parents sign up for one

Session 1 – Preliminary Information meeting with parents

Information/form gathering – always provide a second chance for this to be handed in

Catechetical component – especially to encourage parents to take part in the faith development of their children

Possible components:

- a church tour – gets people up and moving and allows them to rediscover their church
- a DVD – something brief to encourage parents
- a witness talk – a parent who can speak to the experience of journeying with their own children
- the introduction of a preparation resource – always presented as a gift to help parents
- written outline of the upcoming sessions – their purpose, content, timing, etc.

Session 2 -

Continued catechesis with parents and children together or separate or children alone – eg. Dropped off at the parish for a 2 hour session on a Saturday – helps to provide choice to parents so may be offered on two different days

Always include parents for some portion if you can. Have them come for closing prayer, for example. Use it as an opportunity to take in any late paperwork or to give out some further instruction.

Give information regarding the Rite of Enrollment

Session 3 –the Rite of Enrolment

The Rite of Enrollment takes place within a Sunday Mass. Helps to involve the whole parish in the catechetical mission. Children are given the opportunity to publicly commit themselves to their preparation and they receive the visible support of the entire parish in that journey.

Session 4 – Continuing the catechesis

At the end, remind them of the retreat, and let them know that the next session will include critical information about the Confirmation itself.

Session 5 – Rehearsal for Confirmation

Again, this can be much more than a rehearsal. Be sure to have parents present for some of it, if not all. Show parents how you are teaching the children. This can be an opportunity for liturgical catechesis – that is, why we do what we do in Confirmation. “Now the Bishop will anoint you ... and this is WHY he will anoint you.”

Give the practical information about seating, photographs, etc.

Session 6

Confirmation Retreat

Option B

Parish Situation: Single Catholic School associated with the parish

Implications:

Contact of children is probably easily done through parish bulletin/website and may include a letter sent through the school

Foundational catechesis is supported through school - Catechetical Correspondence Courses still available if there are some children in public school

Immediate Prep through the Parish - Practical matters:

Initial parish meeting may be offered as a choice of sessions and parents sign up for one

May invite school staff to participate in some parish sessions – they may assist in many ways, as catechetical volunteers, as help for collection of paperwork, to speak to parents about the school program of catechesis and how it relates to the parish supports, as ushers or other helpers on the day of Confirmation, etc.

Session 1 – Preliminary Information meeting with parents

Information/form gathering – always provide a second chance for this to be handed in

Catechetical component –to encourage parents to take part in the faith development of their children – to help parents see their child’s education in the Catholic school as a support to parents in their role as first educators of the faith

Possible components:

- a church tour – gets people up and moving and allows them to rediscover their church
- a DVD – something brief to encourage parents
- a witness talk – a parent who can speak to the experience of journeying with their own children
- the introduction of a preparation resource – whether parents pay for it or not always presented as a gift to help parents
- written outline of the upcoming sessions – their purpose, content, timing, etc.

Optional Session – at the parish or in the classroom itself

At the parish: Continued catechesis with parents and children together or separate or children alone – eg. Dropped off at the parish for a 2 hour session on a Saturday – helps to provide choice to parents so may be offered on two different days

Give information about the Rite of Enrollment.

In the classroom: Any visit to the children in their classroom by the priest, deacon or parish minister can be a great opportunity to continue your preparation with children. You could speak about the Gifts of the Spirit, the link between Baptism and Confirmation, or a variety of topics. Let them know that their religion lessons at school are helping them to be ready for their Sacraments too so they can see the links in what they are learning. You can check with a teacher about what she has been teaching lately or what she knows about her own students. Is there something they need particularly? You can also just let her know what you would like to focus on in your visit. For example, you might like to tell the children how important the Our Father is as a prayer and practise praying it with them.

Session 2 – The Rite of Enrollment

The Rite of Enrollment takes place within a Sunday Mass. Helps to involve the whole parish in the catechetical mission. Children and families are given the opportunity to publicly commit themselves to their preparation and they receive the visible support of the entire parish in that journey.

Session 3 – Continued Catechesis – may take place in the parish with the assistance of a print resource or in the context of your classroom visit as above.

Session 4 – “Rehearsal” for Confirmation

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Give the practical information about seating, photographs, etc.

Final Session

Confirmation Retreat – some schools may traditionally have a retreat or activity day at the school prior to Confirmation. The outline of the day may or may not suit parish needs. If the school is planning their own activity day at the school, parish staff may visit at the school. If the retreat is happening at the parish, there may be supports you could have from the school. If a parish offers a retreat during school hours, it becomes an invitation of the parish to the school for a class trip. Communication with school staff early in the year or in June of the previous year will help make these kinds of plans come together.

Option C

Parish Situation: Multiple Catholic Schools associated with the parish

Implications:

Contact of children is done through parish bulletin/website and may include a letter sent through the schools – tracking of families and dates and sessions becomes important for the parish

Foundational catechesis is supported through schools - Catechetical Correspondence Courses still available if there are some children in public school

Immediate Prep through the Parish – Practical matters:

Initial parish meeting may be offered as a choice of sessions and parents sign up for one.

Confirmation may be offered in the same way if your parish has more than one Confirmation date.

May invite school staff to participate in some parish prep sessions – they may assist in many ways, as catechetical volunteers, as help for collection of paperwork, to speak to parents about the school program of catechesis and how it relates to the parish supports, as ushers or other helpers on the day of Confirmation, etc.

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