

Frequently Asked Questions About Confirmation

What is Confirmation?

Baptism, Reconciliation, Holy Communion and Confirmation together constitute the 'sacraments of Christian initiation'. The reception of the sacrament of Confirmation ratifies Baptism and completes the grace of being initiated into God's family. It more perfectly binds the Baptised to the Church and enriches them with a special strength of the Holy Spirit. As Christian adults they are called to be true witnesses to Christ, who spread and defend the Faith in what they say and do.

Where did Confirmation come from?

After receiving the Holy Spirit at Pentecost the apostles shared that same Spirit with the newly Baptised 'by the laying on of hands'. In early times anointing with perfumed oil called 'chrism' was added to the laying on of hands so as better to signify this gift. Confirmation is recognized by the Catholic Church as one of 'the seven sacraments instituted by Christ.

Why is oil used?

Oil is a rich symbol of cleansing, limbering, healing, strengthening and beautifying, and all these meanings carry over to our sacraments. Specially consecrated oils were used in ancient times to anoint priests, prophets and kings. Still today they are used in preparing catechumens, in Baptism, in the ordination of priests and bishops, in the coronation of kings and queens, for the consecration of altars, when anointing the sick, and of course in Confirmation.

What are the effects of Confirmation?

The effect of the sacrament of confirmation is the full outpouring of the Holy Spirit, just as the apostles received at Pentecost. It makes us more completely children of the God we call 'Our Father'; it unites us more firmly to Christ his Son; it increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us; it makes us more perfectly members of the Church; and gives us a special strength to be proud of and stand up for Christ and his Church.

What are the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit received at Confirmation?

At Confirmation the Holy Spirit brings the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of right judgment and courage, the spirit of knowledge and reverence, the spirit of holy fear (wonder and awe) in God's presence. The fruits of the Holy Spirit active in our lives are: patience, kindness and goodness; trustfulness, gentleness and self-control; love, peace and joy.

What should happen during my period of preparation ('catechesis') before Confirmation?

You, your parish and your parents have special responsibility for the preparation of Confirmation. Your school teachers and catechists may also help. Preparation for Confirmation aims not only at explaining the symbols and meaning of the sacrament of Confirmation, but also leads you towards intimate union with Christ and a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit. Our hope is that this will help you to assume your new 'apostolic' responsibilities once you have been confirmed.

Who confers the sacrament of Confirmation?

The ordinary minister of Confirmation is the bishop as a successor of the apostles.

What is required for me to be a candidate for Confirmation?

To receive the Sacrament of Confirmation every candidate must:

- Have been Baptised into the Catholic Church
- Have made their First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion
- Be appropriately catechized, want to be Confirmed.

Must I go to Reconciliation (Confession) before Confirmation?

In the Archdiocese of Sydney only candidates who have made their First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion may receive Confirmation. Only those in a state of grace should receive Confirmation, so the Church exhorts those preparing for Confirmation to make a good Reconciliation in the lead up to their Confirmation day.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Please note that there will be group photographs taken with the presiding bishop at the end of the Confirmation Mass. This photograph will be offered to each family. If you do not want your child to be photographed it is your responsibility to make sure that they do not stand with the other children at that time. An official photographer will be engaged and, similar to what happens with school photos, families will make their own financial arrangements with the photographer.

What can I do as a parent to help my child prepare for Confirmation?

The most important thing you do as a parent to help your child prepare for Confirmation is passing on your faith to them and giving a living witness to that faith in your everyday life. You should spend time with your child exploring and complementing the parish Confirmation program and any questions raised. There are many books and resources which you can read together. You might help your child select a Confirmation Name. You should pray with your child to help them prepare for Confirmation. It is a great support for them as they mature in faith if you are with them at Mass each Sunday; you might also go with your child to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation in preparation for the Confirmation day. You will also help with the practicalities such as providing Baptism, Reconciliation and First Holy Communion certificates to the parish, ensuring

that your child takes an active part in the program, and support your child on the Confirmation day by getting him/her there on time!

Who should I choose as a sponsor?

The sponsor should be chosen by the candidate and his or her parents or guardian. They must be a Catholic over 16 years of age, have themselves received Reconciliation, First Holy Communion and Confirmation and be living a life of faith in keeping with the function of a sponsor of a sacrament. They must be willing not only to present and support the candidate on the day of Confirmation, but also to support him or her in fulfilling the baptismal promises faithfully. A sponsor can be one of the candidate's godparents, in fact this is to be preferred; but a sponsor may not be the candidate's parent.

Can parents be the sponsor?

No, the Church presumes that the candidate's parents are already supporting him or her in faith by presenting him or her for Confirmation and asks that an additional person act as sponsor of the candidate on the day.

What does the sponsor do at the Ceremony?

The sponsor shares this special time with the candidate by staying with the candidate throughout the Ceremony. The sponsor brings the candidate forward at the time of anointing and places his or her right hand on the candidate's shoulder.

What happens when my sponsor and I go up to the Bishop to be anointed with the chrism?

Sponsor: Stands behind the Candidate with right hand lightly on candidate's right shoulder. Hands the card with the Confirmation name of the candidate to the assisting acolyte or priest, to display for the bishop to read.

Candidate: Stands in front of the bishop

Bishop: Makes the sign of the cross on Candidate's forehead with chrism saying, "(Confirmation Name), be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit"

Candidate: "Amen"

Bishop: Touches the cheek of the newly confirmed as a sign of peace and says, "Peace be with you".

Candidate: "And with your Spirit".

Sponsor and Candidate return to their seats.

Why choose a Confirmation name?

At Baptism your parents choose your name. Confirmation allows you to make your own choice of name. You may choose one of your baptismal names or a new one name. Any name from the wide selection of saints and blessed of the Church would be suitable, especially one you admire, whom you would like to ask to pray for you and who you would like to model in your own daily life.

Why is the Confirmation Ceremony in Mass?

The Sacrament of Confirmation is usually celebrated within Mass because this most fully demonstrates that Confirmation completes the initiation of the candidate into our Eucharistic Community.