

**ARCHDIOCESE OF DUBUQUE**  
**STATEMENT ABOUT THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION**

**The Sacrament of Confirmation...**

- Brings an increase and deepening of baptismal grace
- Roots us more deeply as children of the Father
- Unites us more firmly to Christ
- Increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit within us
- Renders our bond with the Church more perfect
- Gives a special strength of the Holy Spirit

...In order to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly and never be ashamed of the Cross.  
(See CCC 1303)

**The sacrament of Confirmation  
celebrates the completion of Baptism  
and a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit,  
given through anointing with Sacred Chrism,  
accompanied by the laying on of hands and prayer,  
which strengthens the faithful as members of the Church  
to spread and defend the Catholic Faith by word and deed.**

**Theology of the Sacrament of Confirmation**

In the apostolic age, Confirmation was celebrated by a bishop in conjunction with Baptism and was followed immediately by Eucharist. As the Church grew, it became more and more difficult for a bishop to celebrate all Baptisms with Confirmation. So, priests became the ordinary ministers of Baptism while bishops continued to be the ordinary ministers of Confirmation.

The resulting theology is that Confirmation celebrates the candidate's relation to the bishop of the diocesan Church and, so,

- to the first outpouring of the Spirit to the apostles at Pentecost,
- to the conferral of the Spirit by the apostle's laying on of hands,
- to the apostolic origins of Christ's Church,
- and with the mission of the apostles to spread and defend the faith.

The theological focus assumes a certain maturity. The high school years are considered a more suitable age for candidates to grow deeply toward a complete obedience to Christ and a firm witness to Christ.

**Who May Be Confirmed?**

To be confirmed, the Church requires a candidate to meet the following criteria:

- They must be baptized and not yet be confirmed.
- They must have reached the age of reason (about 7 years old or older).
- They must have a sponsor.
- They must be suitably instructed (see below).

- They must be in the state of grace and have the intention of receiving the sacrament of confirmation -- properly disposed (see below).
- They must be able to renew their baptismal promises (see below).

### **What Does it Mean to Be Suitably Instructed?**

Suitable instruction includes knowing Jesus, His teachings, His example, and what discipleship requires. The tools necessary to form disciples include various forms of prayer and study, the support of parents and sponsors, as well as opportunities to respond to and live the faith. In recognizing that the Sacrament of Confirmation is but one of the Sacraments of Initiation, it is critical to understand its relationship to Baptism and Eucharist. Suitable instruction also includes exploring the symbols of the Holy Spirit and the Rite of Confirmation to ensure full, conscious and active participation in celebrating the sacrament.

### **What Does it Mean to be Properly Disposed?**

To be properly disposed for the celebration of the sacrament, candidates should be in a state of grace and, for those with the use of reason, the intention to receive the sacrament.<sup>1</sup> As with most sacraments, the opportunity for confession should be provided.

### **What Does it Mean to be Able to Renew Baptismal Promises?**

The renewal of baptismal promises is a central theme in the formation for the sacrament. Candidates should be familiar with the questions, their meaning, and their implications in their own lives. This ultimately means that they can and will respond “I do”.

### **Why do we do Confirmation Preparation?**

“Preparation for Confirmation should aim at leading the Christian toward a more intimate union with Christ and a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit – his actions, his gifts and his biddings – in order to be more capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities of Christian life.” (CCC 1309)

### **Principles for Interpreting the Requirements**

When bestowing a sacrament, the Church is giving a gift or granting a “favor”. It is generally the principle that, when granting a “favor”, the Church gives a broad interpretation. The Church opens the door to the sacrament as wide as possible to make it as accessible as possible. So, there should not be undue requirements nor can those who do not fulfill all the components of the parish’s program be denied the sacrament. For example, a parish can offer interviews, service components, retreats, a specific set of sessions, etc., but candidates who do not fulfill them are not to be denied the sacrament on that basis alone. In addition, sacramental preparation is not to be confused with formal faith formation (formal religious instructions). In his Apostolic Exhortation ***Evangelii Gaudium***, the Holy Father Francis says that the “Church is called to be the house of the Father, with doors always wide open.” Further, he makes it clear that the sacraments are “not a prize for the perfect”.

---

<sup>1</sup> Those without use of reason (due to a cognitive disability or similar situation) are presumed to be in a state of grace because they have insufficient will to commit mortal sin.