

DIOCESE OF SPRINGFIELD-CAPE GIRARDEAU

Guidelines for the Sacrament of Confirmation

Revised on September 30, 2019



May 31, 2018

Feast of the Visitation of Blessed Virgin Mary

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In his 2013 letter to the Church, “*Evangelii Gaudium*” (The Joy of the Gospel”), Pope Francis offered a beautiful insight: “The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus,” thus giving the Church a map and guide to her pastoral mission in contemporary society.

That simple opening line reminds us that all we do in the Church should be directed toward an encounter with the living Jesus! In addition, our own Sacred Purpose as expressed in our Mutually Shared Vision for the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau is, “To joyfully live our Catholic faith as intentional disciples, leading all to a full life in Jesus Christ.” With that in mind, the Office of Evangelization, Catechesis, and Youth Formation has gathered input and suggestions from clergy and laity regarding the best practices to enhance the goal of intentional discipleship in preparing and celebrating The Sacrament of Confirmation in our diocese.

The Sacrament of Confirmation bestows the seven gifts necessary to answer our Baptismal call. In receiving the fullness of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, we are strengthened with a new vigor to live and give witness to the faith. While the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation completes the Sacraments of Initiation in the Catholic Church, it also provokes the desire for more. As stated in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, “***The desire for God is written in the human heart ... God never ceases to draw man to Himself***” (CCC 27). Therefore, any Confirmation program should encourage a lifelong journey of growing in wisdom and knowledge in the faith and a deepening relationship with Jesus Christ.

Enclosed you will find diocesan guidelines to assist parents, clergy, and catechists in properly preparing our young people for celebrating the Sacrament of Confirmation. More importantly, it is our hope that through the process of preparing for Confirmation, these young men and women will experience a personal encounter with Christ and begin to understand their call to live as missionary disciples throughout their lives.

“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 action, gifts, and his biddings—in order to be more capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities of Christian life” (CCC 1309).

I thank all those committed to the faith formation of our young people and I assure you of my prayers in this important work of evangelization. May the Sacrament of Confirmation truly be a joy-filled encounter with Jesus Christ.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

The Most Reverend Edward M. Rice
Bishop of Springfield-Cape Girardeau

Table of Contents

	Introduction (Letter from Bishop Edward M. Rice)	
I.	Guidelines Overview	p2
II.	Who May Receive the Sacrament of Confirmation?	p2
III.	What is the Purpose of the Sacrament of Confirmation?	p2
IV.	Preparation Process for the Sacrament of Confirmation	p3
	A. Recommended Two-Year Preparation Process	p4
	1. FIRST YEAR - Proximate Preparation/Formation	
	2. REQUIRED SECOND YEAR - Immediate formation/preparation	
	B. Application to Receive the Sacrament of Confirmation	
	C. Formal Presentation of Candidates to the Parish Community	
	D. Choosing a Sponsor	
	E. Involving Parish Mentors	
	F. Participating in Works of Mercy Through Planned Service Activities	
	G. Sacrament of Penance as Part of the Preparation for Confirmation	
	H. Retreats	
	I. Choosing a Confirmation Name	
	J. Letter of Intent to the Bishop	
	K. Interviews	
	L. Role of parents and sponsors	
V.	Celebration of the Sacrament	p10
VI.	Celebration for Persons with Disabilities	p11
VII.	Post Confirmation Missionary Discipleship Training	p11
VIII.	Important Checklist and Due Dates for Confirmation Forms	p12
IX.	Parish Records	p13
X.	Confirmation Catechist Certification and Specialized Training	p13

Appendices:

- A. List of Diocesan Approved and Recommended Text and Video Resources
- B. Sample - Confirmation Application Form
- C. Sample - Sponsor Validation Form
- D. Sample - Evening of Prayer and Reflection Prior to Confirmation
- E. Sample – Penance Service for Candidates, Candidates’ Families, and Sponsors
- F. Sample - Middle School/Junior High Guide to the Sacrament of Penance
- G. Suggestions for Works of Mercy
- H. Confirmation Information and Liturgy Plan Sheet **(to be completed and returned to the Office of Faith Formation)**
- I. Guidelines for Liturgy Planning
- J. Reading Selections for the Confirmation Mass outside of the Sunday Liturgy
- K. The Universal Prayer for Confirmation
- L. Parish Records Checklist **(to be available for Bishop on day of Confirmation)**

I. Guidelines Overview

These guidelines were composed by the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau to provide pastors, clergy, parish catechetical leaders, and Confirmation preparation teams the essential information and formation necessary to help form the faith of young people in preparation of receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation. The time of formation within our parishes should never be a “checklist of requirements to earn the Sacrament” nor “one last chance to teach all the doctrines we believe as Catholics.” As church leaders and catechists, we must create an environment where the Candidates can personally encounter Jesus Christ. We further accompany the youth and their families on their journey of faith, forming them to better answer their Baptismal call to live as missionary disciples, and equipping them to carry the Good News of Jesus Christ to a world starving for a relationship with God the Father, God the Son Jesus Christ, and God the Holy Spirit. Preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation is forming a young person for a change in the way they approach life.

II. Who May Receive the Sacrament of Confirmation?

A. The Age of Formation and Reception for the Sacrament of Confirmation, as determined by the Bishop of the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau, is for those students who are enrolled in the 7th, 8th or 9th grade. The pastor, in consultation with his ministry staff, will discern which grade levels will be prepared and Confirmed (7th, 8th, and/or 9th) within their parish, based on their scheduled cycle for the celebration of the Sacrament and the dynamics of their parish community.

***NOTE:** This age policy does not apply to children seven years of age or older at the time of their Baptism. In such cases, the Rite of Christian Initiation (nos. 14, 17, 23, 215) and Canon Law (Can. 883 §2) dictate that a child should receive the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and First Holy Communion concurrently, in accordance with the Rites of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) adapted for Children. For more information regarding RCIA adapted for Children, please contact the Office of Evangelization, Catechesis, and Youth Formation.

B. “Those who are to receive Confirmation must have already been baptized. Moreover, those faithful possessing the use of reason must be in a state of grace, be properly instructed, and be capable of renewing the baptismal promises” (Intro: Order of Confirmation, #12). It is the responsibility of the pastor with the assistance of the parish Confirmation team to determine if a candidate has been adequately prepared and is properly disposed for receiving the Sacrament.

III. What is the Purpose of the Sacrament of Confirmation?

Candidates, sponsors, parents, and the parish community will more fully engage in the formation process for Confirmation if they have a better understanding of the purpose of this sacrament and its importance in the disciple’s life.

In the Apostolic Age of the Church, those not Confirmed had not completed their Baptism (Acts 8:14-17). For the Early Church, the sealing of the Holy Spirit was an integral and necessary part of Baptism. It remains as an essential part of full initiation into the Church today. Every baptized person not yet Confirmed can and should receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. The three Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist form a unity. Without Confirmation and Eucharist, Baptism is certainly valid and efficacious, but Christian initiation remains incomplete (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* [CCC], 1306–1308). It is important to impart to the Candidates and their parents, that although the

Sacrament of Confirmation completes the Sacraments of Initiation, it does not complete faith formation. Through the anointing of the Holy Spirit in the Sacrament of Confirmation, the people of God are able to more fully participate in the life of Jesus as they continue the lifelong journey of seeking, learning, and growing in the faith.

The Catechism tells us that Confirmation brings an increase and deepening of baptismal grace. It is often known as the sacrament of strengthening.

- It roots us more deeply in the divine filiation which makes us cry, “Abba! Father!”
- It unites us more firmly to Christ.
- It increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us.
- It renders our bond with the Church more perfect.
- It gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit 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. (CCC 303)

Confirmation is NOT:

- Something to be earned after fulfilling a checklist of requirements.
- A rite of passage for adolescents who will now be deemed as “adults in the faith.”
- A time to learn **everything** about the Catechism and the teachings of the Church.

IV. Preparation Process for the Sacrament of Confirmation

Sacramental formation for all youth, including those students attending Catholic school, will take place within the parish. The beginning of any sacrament formation process is evangelization: introducing children, adolescents, and adults to the person of Jesus Christ by creating opportunities for them to encounter Christ and recognize his presence in their daily lives. Evangelization is rooted in the *Kerygma*, the proclamation of the essential “Good News” (Jesus loves you, He died for you, and he walks with you every step of your life’s journey). All sacramental formation should present the *Kerygma* to the people and relate the Church’s teachings to that message. The pastor, catechists, mentors, sponsors, parents, and the whole parish community give witness to the *Kerygma* through word and action for those preparing to receive the Sacraments.

Evangelization rooted in the *Kerygma* calls for more than just classroom and textbook learning. Through a comprehensive preparation process that encourages participation in various activities and experiences of the Catholic faith, the Candidates will have many opportunities to open their eyes, ears, heart, and mind to receiving the Holy Spirit and continuing to form a relationship with Christ Jesus and his Church.

Sacrament preparation should include the following:

- Foundational faith formation.
- Proximate preparation the year before Confirmation.
- Immediate preparation during the year of Confirmation.
- A sponsor.
- Mass attendance and participation in the Sacraments of the Church (especially Eucharist and Penance).
- Works of mercy.
- Retreats.
- Reconciliation service.
- Involvement in the parish community.

A. Recommended Two-Year Preparation Process

Both Catholic school students and the Parish School of Religion (PSR) participants will enter a two-year faith formation and preparation process within the parish. During the first year, formal catechesis may take place in the religion class for those enrolled in Catholic schools or in the PSR setting for those not enrolled in Catholic school. Catechesis may also take place in a Homeschool setting using materials approved by the pastor. Periodic meetings should be scheduled with the Homeschool family and the pastor or his designated representative to assist with any catechetical needs.

ALL Candidates will participate in the immediate sacramental formation program offered at the parish in which they are registered, during the second year. Throughout the entire two-year process, parishes are highly encouraged to invite all Candidates to participate together in planned activities such as Confirmation retreats, works of mercy, special prayer services, and other intentional opportunities where youth may encounter Jesus Christ and more actively practice their faith. **If a candidate for Confirmation wishes to prepare for and/or be confirmed in a parish other than the parish in which they are registered, they will need the permission of the pastors of both parishes.**

A list of diocesan approved and recommended catechetical materials has been provided (Appendix A). These resources are suggested tools to assist the catechist in proper faith formation. The list will be updated as new resources are published and evaluated by the Office of Evangelization, Catechesis, and Youth Formation, and approved by the Bishop. However, similar to the formation of Jesus' first disciples, the young people will more fully understand who God is and how to live their Baptismal call to discipleship by hearing the personal testimony and observing the lived examples of faith from their parents, sponsors, catechists, and parish community. It is important to develop a process that consists of more than merely reading from a text or watching video clips.

1. FIRST YEAR - Proximate Preparation/Formation (the year prior to Confirmation)

The understanding of all four pillars of the Catechism (Creed, Sacraments, Morality, and Prayer) is important for Catholics. Up to this point, the faith formation of the child should have included all four pillars as well as Sacred Scripture. The year of proximate preparation/formation for the Sacrament of Confirmation should help adolescents deepen their relationship with Christ and more fully embrace the call to discipleship by:

- Providing continued instruction and discussion on the professed beliefs of the Catholic faith so that Candidates may develop a fuller understanding and appreciation of the faith.
- Providing continued instruction and discussion on the importance of Liturgy and Sacraments as opportunities to encounter Christ and cooperate with grace; inviting youth to more fully, consciously, and actively participate in liturgical and sacramental celebrations within the parish.
- Providing guidance in living a moral life as a disciple of Christ through lessons that encompass more than ethics, but rather convey morality as the lived teachings of Christ and His Church and focus on the virtues and spiritual gifts as a means for developing their own moral conscience (i.e. an ethical person knows it is wrong to steal; a moral person chooses not to steal).
- Providing instruction and opportunities to form personal spiritual disciplines such as reading, discussing, and meditating on Sacred Scripture and engaging in various forms of prayer.

2. REQUIRED SECOND YEAR - Immediate Preparation (the year of Confirmation)

The second year of Confirmation preparation is a wonderful time to take the ignited hearts of the youth into an enriched focus on their relationship with God and his Church through the Sacrament of Confirmation.

The immediate preparation process for Confirmation must be understood within the context of lifelong catechesis and within the context of ongoing adolescent catechesis. It is not an appropriate time for bearing the weight of providing all information and formation in faith necessary for adult living. It should thoroughly inform and prepare the candidate for participation in the Order of Confirmation, its components, symbols, and effects. It should focus on completion of initiation and on active membership in the church community, as well as invite young people to a lived discipleship in the world. Like all catechesis, it should focus on the person of Jesus Christ, draw its lessons from Scripture, and invite them to a closer relationship and modeling of him in everyday life” (Archdiocese of Baltimore, “Seal of the Spirit,” 14).

Immediate preparation should include some ritual-based catechesis that emphasizes what the Candidate will experience during the Order of Confirmation and help them understand the significance and graces of the sacrament. It is also an appropriate time to acquaint the youth with the concept of stewardship, helping them to discern how God is calling them to use their gifts of time, talent, and treasure as an active participant in the Church and in their community.

Immediate preparation process will normally take a minimum of eight to ten weeks, not counting retreats, works of mercy, and other activities. Please plan appropriately. For example, if your parish is scheduled for the Order of Confirmation in mid-November, immediate preparation must begin no later than the first week of September with weekly sessions throughout September, October, and November.

B. Application to Receive the Sacrament of Confirmation (optional - for parish use only)

At the beginning of the immediate (second) year of the preparation process, Candidates for the Sacrament of Confirmation should be encouraged to fill out an “Application” form requesting the Sacrament. This formality causes people to slow down and think, “Am I doing what I want to be doing?” It is the responsibility of the parents and the Church to properly evangelize and catechize the young person so that they can freely and confidently choose the Sacrament of Confirmation. This form should involve the parents as well as the Candidate. (See Appendix B for a sample application form.)

C. Formal Presentation of Candidates to the Parish Community

To enlist the involvement of the entire parish in Confirmation formation, a formal presentation of the Candidates to the parish community during a Sunday Liturgy is encouraged at the beginning of their immediate (second) year of preparation. The homily should emphasize the role of the parish in preparing the Candidates. All parishioners bear the responsibility of accompanying the Candidates and their families through witness and prayer during the preparation process.

D. Choosing a Confirmation Sponsor

1. It is the sponsor’s responsibility to demonstrate the place of the Gospel in his or her own life and in society. Additionally they help the Candidate with questions, doubts, and anxieties as they watch over the progress of the Candidate’s walk of faith.

The sponsor's responsibility remains important throughout life, guiding and encouraging the Candidate to remain faithful to his or her baptismal promises (RCIA 43) (Can. 874, 893).

2. The Code of Canon Law of the Catholic Church outlines the requirements for those who will serve as sponsors during the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation. There should be only one sponsor, male or female, for each of those to be confirmed. The qualifications for sponsors include:
 - The sponsor **must be a Catholic** who has already received the Sacraments of initiation of the Catholic Church: Baptism, Confirmation and the Holy Eucharist [Can. 874 §1 No. 3].
 - The sponsor must be **at least 16 years of age** [Can. 874 §1 No. 2].
 - The sponsor must be “lead(ing) a life in harmony with the faith and the role to be undertaken” [Can. 874 §1 No. 3]. Principally, this means that the sponsor **must be a practicing Catholic**, one who is participating in the Church's life of worship each week (the Sunday Eucharist), and observing the laws of the Church with respect to the Sacrament of Matrimony.
 - “It is desirable (but not required) that the one who undertook the role of sponsor at Baptism, be sponsor for Confirmation” [Can. 893 §2]. That person must currently satisfy all the canonical requirements to be a sponsor.
 - It is further recommended (but not required) that the sponsor be an active member of the same parish as the Candidate so that the sponsor may continue to be a source of spiritual encouragement for the Confirmandi beyond Confirmation.
 - The parent of the Candidate **cannot** serve in the role of sponsor. The parent's role in the celebration of the Rite of Baptism, in the celebration of the Order of Confirmation, and in the Christian upbringing of their children is different than that of a sponsor chosen to continue to assist the Candidate for Confirmation in his or her spiritual growth. As the Code of Canon Law describes this role, “it is for the sponsor to see that the confirmed person acts as a true witness to Christ and faithfully fulfills the obligation connected with this sacrament” [Can. 892].

*** It is highly recommended that a Sponsor complete and sign a Validation Form which will be turned in to the parish. (See Appendix C for a sample.)**

E. Involving Parish Mentors

Quite often, a sponsor is selected by the Candidate, who is not currently living in the same area or participating in the same parish as the Candidate. The parish Confirmation team should consider assigning a parish “mentor” to each Candidate or to each small group of Candidates. The mentor would not take the place of the sponsor, although they may serve as a sponsor. Mentors are adult parishioners whose lives exemplify the life of a disciple of Christ. They are active in the parish, enthusiastic about sharing their Catholic faith, and are able to easily connect with the youth and their parents. They should be invited to meet informally with their Candidate(s) at periodic times throughout the preparation process to allow the Candidate an opportunity to ask questions, express joys or doubts, and engage in discussion. The overall role of the mentor is to serve as another strong witness of discipleship as they accompany the youth and their parents through this preparation process.

As with all adults who work with children in our diocese, the Confirmation mentors for the parish need to be in compliance with the Diocesan Safe Environment Policies.

F. Participating in Works of Mercy through Planned Service Activities

As Catholics, service is not just something we do, but it is essential to our Catholic identity. In his reflections on the Year of Mercy, Pope Francis clearly stated, “A Christian must necessarily be merciful, because this is the center of the Gospel. ...The way of mercy is the way of life.”

Rather than requiring a specific number of service hours from each Candidate, a communal work of mercy undertaken with their family, with their sponsor, and with other Candidates for Confirmation, should be the norm. The Confirmation group would begin with a discussion of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy and research when and where Jesus performed such acts or preached about such acts, during his time on earth. The Candidates may then be encouraged to find small ways to begin incorporating these works in their daily life as they embrace their role as Missionary Disciples of Christ. (See Appendix G for suggestions.)

Additionally, a structured group service project or work of mercy should be planned to provide the youth an experience of actively serving others as the hands, feet, and compassionate heart of Christ. When considering the service component of your program, determine the end goal. Service is not slave labor. Does the service component mentor discipleship or does it more resemble a checklist? Think about offering specific works of mercy instead of tallying a set number of hours. Will the service component truly help your candidates become missionary disciples of Jesus Christ? Further, Candidates should be encouraged to assist in the planning and organizing of this group service project or work of mercy so as to promote the development of strong youth leaders in the parish.

“God is present at the point where the eyes of those who give and those who receive meet.” –Simone Weil

The follow up to this project is equally important. The Candidates will need the opportunity to meet together afterward to unpack the experience, processing how this activity affected them, the people they served, and the wider community. It is important to help the Candidates to make the connection between the experience and our call to live as Disciples of Christ through our daily participation in corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

- Encourage parents and families to participate in these service activities!

G. Sacrament of Penance as Part of Preparation for Confirmation

It is expected that the Candidates for the Sacrament of Confirmation will receive the Sacrament of Penance before receiving their Confirmation. Please ensure that this sacrament is made available for the Candidates. Ideally, the parish will have a Penance Service specifically for the Candidates, families, and sponsors one or two weeks prior to celebrating the Sacrament of Confirmation. (Appendix E is a sample Penance Service. Feel free to adapt and change this to meet the needs of your parish.)

Parishes may utilize the communal Penance service being held at their parish during Advent or Lent. However, please meet with the Confirmation Candidates at least one hour prior to the service to allow an opportunity for discussion about the Sacrament of Penance and to provide a time of quiet reflection during which they may have a proper Examination of Conscience. (A Guideline for the Sacrament of Penance, suitable for Middle School and Junior High School children, is attached as Appendix F.)

H. Retreat

Retreats offer a unique opportunity for the Candidates to encounter Christ. Enriching retreat experiences are not strictly catechetical in nature, but should provide an engaging formational experience of life as a Catholic Christian; life as a Missionary Disciple. It is expected that the Candidates for the Sacrament of Confirmation would be provided the opportunity to attend at least one retreat which is geared toward their life after Confirmation as a Missionary Disciple of Jesus Christ.

We encourage the individual parish or collaborative group of parishes to facilitate a day of retreat (typically 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.) or an overnight retreat. A time for sponsor and/or parent participation could be incorporated into this event as well. Please contact the Diocesan Office of Evangelization, Catechesis, and Youth Formation for resources and information on retreat programs that may be used in the parish or for a list of possible retreat speakers/leaders. Additionally, the diocesan office will offer a one-day regional and/or diocesan wide youth event each year.

I. Choosing a Confirmation Name

It is the tradition in the Catholic Church for a Confirmation Candidate to take the name of a saint, or a person whose “eminent sanctity has been recognized,” as his or her Confirmation name. It is also appropriate for a Candidate for Confirmation to use their Baptismal name as their Confirmation name.

Selecting a Confirmation name relates to creation and recreation (conversion), respectively. In Semitic thought, a name conveyed the reality of that person (note that God named John and Jesus among others). A name change is a Scriptural expression for a new state of happiness, a new way of life, new life. **“You shall be called by a new name ...”** (Isaiah 62:2b).

This tradition has its roots with many famous name changes in the Bible:

Abram - Abraham (Genesis 17:5)	Sarai - Sarah (Genesis 17:15)
Jacob - Israel (Genesis 35:10)	Simon - Peter (Matthew 16:18)
Saul - Paul (Acts 9:1-30; 13:9)	

J. Letter of Intent to Bishop

The person who desires Confirmation should make an individual decision and express this decision through a written letter to the Bishop. Confirmation Candidate letter to the Bishop must include:

- **the name of Candidate,**
- **the Parish name and city of Candidate, and**
- **a specific request to the bishop to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. Anyone over the age of reason (normally 7 or older) must ask to receive the sacrament on their own behalf.**

Optional additional information the Bishop would be interested in hearing:

- Which name you chose for your confirmation, and why.
- Something from your retreat experience that was powerful for you and why.
- Something that touched you from an Act of Mercy in which you participated
- What you remember the most from your preparation for the sacrament

Please gather ALL CANDIDATE LETTERS from the parish and mail them in a packet TOGETHER at LEAST ONE MONTH BEFORE the scheduled day of Confirmation. Send by mail by to the Office of Faith Formation at the Catholic Center.

K. Interviews

- The Pastor will conduct an interview with each Candidate to determine if they are suitably prepared and properly disposed to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. This interview may be conducted by the pastor or a person designated by the pastor to assist him in interviewing the Candidates. Appropriate persons would be an Associate Pastor, a Deacon, a Pastoral Associate, or a Director of Religious Education. The interview should last around 15 minutes and questions should focus on the activities and discussions included in the preparation process.

NOTE: The Director of Religious Education, Confirmation Coordinator and Confirmation Catechists have an important responsibility to discuss with the pastor any concerns they may have in regard to a specific Candidate. The final decision as to whether a Candidate is suitably prepared and properly disposed to receive the Sacrament is rightfully that of the pastor's.

- The Bishop will meet with Candidates and sponsors as a group, for about 30-45 minutes immediately prior to the Sacrament of Confirmation being celebrated (parents may be invited as well if space allows). Please arrange for a quiet location, at least one hour prior to the beginning of Mass, for the Bishop's meeting. Additionally, please allow for at least 15 minutes following this meeting for Mass preparation. The Bishop's meeting does not take the place of the pastor's interview.

L. Role of Parents

Parents are the primary catechists of their children. During a child's baptism, the parents made a promise before God, his minister, and his people. This time of formation for Confirmation is the perfect time to remind parents of this promise: "You have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so **you** are accepting the responsibility of training them in the practice of the faith. It will be **your** duty to bring them up to keep God's commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?" (Rite of Baptism for Children # 39).

It is the responsibility of the pastor and parish community to partner with parents in the formation of their children's faith. Parishes must seek to involve families in the sacramental preparation process every step of the way as this is an opportunity to evangelize and support the faith journey of the whole family. It should be clear to parents that they are always welcome and encouraged to attend Confirmation preparation sessions, works of mercy activities, and retreats (when appropriate). Additionally, invite parents to share their own faith journey and their own Confirmation experience with their children.

Parents should be encouraged to be "prayer warriors" for their children at events in which their children participate during Confirmation preparation. If possible, Eucharistic Adoration could occur in an adjacent room/chapel during these events, allowing parents to pray for their children before the Blessed Sacrament. The Candidates may then join their parents for Benediction during the conclusion of the event.

Parents will be expected to:

- Assist their child in completing the Application to Receive Confirmation.
- Complete a letter explaining why the Catholic faith is important to them and why they wish for their child to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. This letter would be a great resource to use during a retreat where the letter could be shared with the child. (Sample description may be found on back of Appendix B)
- Pray for their child every day.
- Participate with their child in at least one work of mercy.
- Discuss with their child, the role that Jesus and his Church have in their lives and why they have chosen to be a Catholic Christian.
- Participate in retreats and other activities when appropriate.
- Consistently attend Sunday and Obligatory Holy Day Masses with the child.
- Attend an initial meeting with the pastor, catechists, and other families preparing for Confirmation.

***NOTE:** This parent meeting should explain the Sacrament of Confirmation and the preparation process. However, please do not make it purely a business meeting. Remember this is a wonderful opportunity to evangelize by creating a positive environment with an overall goal of inviting families to share in the joy of journeying with their children in the preparation process. Please include time for prayer and small group discussion, allowing families some time to get better acquainted with one another and to share some of the joys and challenges of Catholic Christian parenting.

V. Celebration of the Sacrament

- A.** Confirmation is to be celebrated during the Eucharistic Liturgy, and may take place on a weeknight or during weekend Masses. If held during the Saturday Vigil Mass or on a Sunday, the readings for the Sunday liturgy are to be used. If the Sacrament is conferred during a weekday celebration, the readings may be taken from the choices listed in the Order of Confirmation. **The planning of the Liturgy for Confirmation is the responsibility of the local parish. Please refer to the Order of Confirmation book and the Diocesan Liturgical Guidelines provided by the Diocesan Office of Worship (see Appendices H-K).**
- B.** Yearly regional Confirmation celebrations are an option for smaller parishes unable to offer Confirmation every year in their own parish. The site of the celebration should rotate to a different parish each year. Please contact the Bishop's office if pastors in a particular region are in agreement and an annual regional celebration is desired.
- C.** The use of stoles, or anything resembling stoles, worn by the Candidates during Confirmation, is expressly prohibited in the guidelines outlined by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishop (USCCB) Office of Divine Worship, and are prohibited in this diocese. Stoles are a symbol reserved exclusively to the Sacrament of Holy Orders.
- D.** All Candidates will wear a name tag during the liturgical celebration. The name tag should include the Candidate's full name in small lettering and their Confirmation name in large lettering in the center. (See Appendix I for example.)

VI. **Celebration for Persons with Disabilities (Quoted from USCCB Guidelines)**

Parents, those who care for persons with disabilities, and shepherds of souls—especially pastors—are to see to it that the faithful who have been baptized receive the formation needed for the Sacrament of Confirmation and approach it at the appropriate time. “The diocesan bishop is obliged to take care that the Sacrament of Confirmation is conferred on subjects who properly and reasonably seek it” (16).

Confirmation is to be conferred on the faithful between the age of discretion (which is about the age of seven) and about 16 years of age, within the limits determined by the diocesan bishop, or when there is a danger of death, or in the judgment of the minister a grave cause urges otherwise (17).

All baptized Catholics who possess the use of reason may receive the Sacrament of Confirmation if they are “suitably instructed, properly disposed and able to renew the baptismal promises.” Persons who because of intellectual or developmental disabilities may never attain the use of reason can receive the Sacrament of Confirmation and should be encouraged either directly, or through their parents if necessary, to receive it. It is important that they receive the pastoral guidance needed, along with the welcome and embrace of the whole community of faith. To the degree possible, those with disabilities should be included along with others during the preparation and celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation. At times, pastoral need may necessitate an accommodated setting and a simpler manner (18).

When those with disabilities who are already baptized Christians desire to become Catholic, they should participate in the “*Rite of Reception of Baptized Christians into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church*,” which normally includes the reception of the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist (20).

– From the USCCB “**Guidelines for the Reception of the Sacraments by Persons with Disabilities**” #16-20

<http://www.usccb.org/about/divine-worship/policies/guidelines-sacraments-persons-with-disabilities.cfm>

VII. **Post Confirmation Missionary Discipleship Formation**

The parish will be expected to provide post-Confirmation faith formation for the newly Confirmed that will assist them in their journey as life-long Missionary Disciples.

- An evening or afternoon of reflection, within one or two weeks of the Confirmation liturgy, is highly recommended for the newly Confirmed youth to unpack and discuss their experience. Sponsors and parents may be included in this opportunity for reflection.
- Invite the newly Confirmed to choose and commit to at least one ministry in which they will actively participate within the parish (ie. Liturgical roles, youth ministry programs, outreach opportunities, etc.).
- Parishes are expected to have an active youth ministry program that is ready to receive the newly confirmed. This ministry is crucial for the ongoing faith formation of the newly confirmed and vital in supporting their role as Missionary Disciples of Christ. It is highly recommended that the parish youth ministry programs work closely with Confirmation preparation process so as to make the transition to post Confirmation faith formation easier for the newly confirmed.
- If your parish needs assistance with establishing a youth ministry program, please contact the Diocesan Office of Evangelization, Catechesis, and Youth Formation.

VIII. CHECKLIST AND DUE DATES FOR CONFIRMATION FORMS

A. REQUIRED FORMS TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE OFFICE OF THE BISHOP:

1. Request a date for your parish Confirmation

The request is to be made at least one year prior to the celebration of the Sacrament and announcements are typically released in June. If you would like to request a specific date, please send three potential dates. It is often easier to obtain a desired weeknight rather than a Saturday or Sunday.

Please email Sarah Pittman spittman@dioscgo.org with your potential dates. If someone other than the pastor is sending the request, the pastor must be included/copied on the email.

*If pastors in a specific region agree to hold an annual regional Confirmation celebration, please contact the Bishop's office.

B. REQUIRED INFORMATION TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE OFFICE OF FAITH FORMATION ONE MONTH BEFORE THE CONFIRMATION MASS

- 1. Confirmation Information Sheet - Appendix H**
- 2. Liturgy Planning Form - Appendix H**
- 3. Worship Aid – if applicable**
- 4. Candidate's Letters to the Bishop**

Send all letters to the Bishop in one large envelope. It is not necessary to have them in individual envelopes.

C. REQUIRED INFORMATION FOR USE IN THE PARISH:

1. Baptismal Certificate

If the Candidate was not baptized in the parish where they are being confirmed, the Candidate must submit a copy of their baptismal record from the parish in which they were baptized. The parish confirming the Candidate should retain the copy of the Baptismal certificate in their sacramental records. (PLEASE DO NOT SEND THEM TO THE BISHOP'S OFFICE.)

2. Parish Records Checklist Form

This form will be used by the Bishop when he reviews the sacramental records book of the parish. This form, and your parish sacramental records book, should be available for the Bishop's review in the vesting sacristy prior to Mass. The Bishop will personally return this form to the Catholic Center. (Appendix L)

D. OPTIONAL FORMS FOR USE IN THE PARISH:

1. Candidate Application Form

This to help the Confirmation Coordinator get better acquainted with the candidates presenting themselves for Confirmation and should be retained in the parish. (Appendix B)

2. Sponsor Validation Form

This to help ensure that a sponsor for Confirmation meets all the required canonical requirements of the Church to be a sponsor. It is solely for the pastor and Confirmation Coordinators use and should be retained in the parish. (Appendix C)

3. Parent's Letters to the Candidate

These letters are for use at the discretion of the pastor or Confirmation Coordinator. (See description on back of Candidate Application – Appendix B)

IX. Parish Records

- The reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation must be recorded in the parish sacramental records.
- Additionally, a copy of this record must be sent to the parish where the Candidate was baptized so that it may be registered in their records as well.
- **The Bishop will be reviewing all parish sacramental records during his visit to the parish for the Order of Confirmation. Please have all records updated and ready for Bishop's review.**

X. Confirmation Catechist Certification and Specialized Training

- A. Under the certification process for the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau, Confirmation catechists are expected to be certified or working toward certification at the Basic or Foundational level.
- B. Catechists must be in compliance with the Diocesan Safe Environment Policies.