
Subject: 2022 Confirmation Request Survey to Pastors



July 16, 2021

Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston

Office of the Cardinal

Dear Pastors,

Thank you for all that you have done to serve the youth of your parish over the last several months, especially those being formed for the sacrament of Confirmation. These days of summer are a time of preparation before the pace of parish life quickens in the fall.

As you plan your Confirmation program for the coming year, I encourage you and your faith formation team to review the Confirmation guidelines for this Archdiocese. For your convenience, some of those guidelines are enclosed. You may access the full document on our website, <http://www.archgh.org/fileimports/CCE/guidelines-confirmation-english.pdf> (password: archgh).

I would like to bring special attention to the scheduling of Confirmation Masses in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston. Every year, pastors are asked to consider dates outside of the Easter season, especially during February, March, and the fall months. I am grateful that many pastors have responded to this request. Nonetheless, the majority of parishes continue to submit requests for April, May, and June, and in the past we have facilitated as many of these requests as the calendar could fit, often with 5 or 7 Confirmation Masses per week during these months.

The large number of parishes in this local Church makes for a full schedule of Confirmation liturgies. **In order to reduce the great strain of the peak months, I ask that every pastor, when submitting potential Confirmation dates, submit at least one date outside the peak months of April, May, and June.** Otherwise, some parishes requesting an Easter season Confirmation may receive a date for the following fall. Furthermore, for parishes that can facilitate evening Masses during the week, **consideration of a weeknight option is highly encouraged**, since the majority of parishes request weekend dates. Please note that two or more separate Masses are needed when the number of candidates exceeds **120**. **Please remember that adults should be registered for Confirmation through the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization. Adults are Confirmed at the Archdiocesan Adult Confirmation liturgies at the Baptism of the Lord in January and again at Pentecost.**

I am pleased to inform you that the Confirmation Request Form is online. Please visit:

<https://archgh.cvent.com/2022Confirmations> and follow the on-screen instructions. This process should facilitate a more timely notification of your Confirmation date. The form must be completed by **August 23, 2021**, and late requests may be deferred until 2023. Additional information will be sent once dates are finalized.

The digital version of this letter has been sent to your archdiocesan email account, which the presbyterate has been informed of through the Office of the Vicar for Clergy. I look forward to this joyous occasion in the life of your parish. With prayerful best wishes in the Lord, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel Cardinal DiNardo". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning of the first word.

Daniel Cardinal DiNardo
Archbishop of Galveston-Houston
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Enclosure

A. General Principles for Sacramental Catechesis

The National Directory for Catechesis (NDC, 2005) developed by the USCCB provides the guiding catechetical framework for the Catholic Church in the United States

- Dioceses and parishes should present sacramental catechesis that:
 - a. Is a comprehensive and systematic formation in the faith, one that integrates knowledge of the faith with living the faith
 - b. Is fundamentally Trinitarian and centers on initiation into the life of the Triune God
 - c. Presents Christian life as a lifelong journey to the Father in the Son and through the Holy Spirit
 - d. Is appropriate to the age level, maturity, and circumstances of those being catechized
 - e. Is intended for all members of the Christian community, takes place within the community, and involves the whole community of faith
 - f. Involves parents in the preparation of their children for the sacraments
 - g. Is integrated into a comprehensive catechetical program
 - h. Focuses primarily on the symbols, rituals, and prayers contained in the rite for each sacrament
 - i. Enables the believer to reflect on the meaning of the sacrament received by implementing a thorough experience of mystagogia following the celebration

B. Sacramental Catechesis for Confirmation (NDC, 36, A. 2)

Preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation is grounded in the Church's understanding that Baptism, the Eucharist, and the sacrament of Confirmation together constitute the "Sacraments of Christian Initiation," whose unity must be safeguarded. It must be explained to the faithful that the reception of the sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace. For "by the sacrament of Confirmation, [the baptized] are more perfectly bound to the Church and are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit. Hence they are, as true witnesses of Christ, more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed [CCC: 1285].

- Dioceses and parishes should present catechesis for the Sacrament of Confirmation that:
 - a. Teaches that Confirmation increases and deepens the grace of baptism, imprinting an indelible character on the soul
 - b. Teaches that Confirmation strengthens the baptismal conferral of the Holy Spirit on those confirmed in order to incorporate them more firmly in Christ, strengthen their bond with the Church, associate them more closely with the Church's mission, increase in them the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and help them bear witness to the Christian faith in words and deeds.
 - c. Teaches about the role of the Holy Spirit, his gifts, and his fruits
 - d. Is developmentally appropriate and includes retreat experiences
 - e. Includes instruction on the Rite of Confirmation and its basic symbols: the imposition of hands, the anointing with Sacred Chrism, and the words of the sacramental formula.**
 - f. Ensures that parents and sponsors are involved in the catechetical preparation of the children for Confirmation
 - g. Teaches that the bishop is the ordinary minister of the Sacrament of Confirmation (in the Eastern Churches, however, the priest is the ordinary minister of Chrismation)

C. Norms for Confirmation Formation as Directed by Cardinal DiNardo

Confirmation preparation should be understood within the context of forming disciples. Adolescent discipleship is a movement toward adult discipleship. Confirmation is not the sacrament of maturity but rather a strengthening of baptismal grace in the ongoing commitment as a disciple of Christ.

Confirmation candidates should be living their baptismal call to discipleship through:

- 1. Weekly participation in the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church*
- 2. Participation in ongoing, systematic catechesis and sacramental catechesis for Confirmation*
- 3. Active participation in the mission of the Church*
- 4. Consistent living of the moral life*
- 5. Engaging in personal and communal prayer*

- Confirmation formation should emphasize:
 - a. Leading the young person toward a more intimate union with Christ and a deepening familiarity with the Holy Spirit - his action, his gifts, and his bidding. Within this loving experience which God has initiated, God invites a response to bear much fruit.
 - b. That Confirmation involves the completion of Baptism and the strengthening of Baptismal faith.
 - c. Understanding and articulating the Creed which is rooted in Scripture. This includes recognizing how the Trinity's creative, redemptive, and sanctifying love is alive and active in the Church and in their daily lives.
 - d. Understanding and articulating the meaning of a sacrament.
 - e. Understanding and articulating the meaning of being strengthened, anointed with chrism, and sealed by the Holy Spirit to be missioned.
 - f. Developing a Catholic understanding of as well as love for Sacred Scripture.
 - g. Ongoing, systematic catechesis as a separate but complementary dimension of faith formation. The Christian disciple should possess both an understanding of and the ability to articulate the fundamentals of our faith.
- Pastors and priests should be involved in some aspect of the preparation of the candidates (e.g. interviews, catechesis, retreats, etc.).
- Sponsors & catechists should be persons exhibiting a mature faith and who are highly convinced that faith makes a difference in their lives.
- Candidates preparing to receive Confirmation should be in the 10th or 11th grade, with at least one year of immediate sacramental formation prior to the reception of the Sacrament.
- Every candidate should use sacramental (and systematic) catechetical texts in conformity with the list produced by the USCCB Subcommittee on the Catechism (search for "Subcommittee on Catechism" using your search engine and find the related USCCB website – the Conformity List can be found there).
- Christian service should be viewed as an essential dimension in the invitation to discipleship which fosters the Church's mission. The "Service" section of the Guidelines offers more specific information.
- Retreats: The National Directory for Catechesis [NDC, 36, 2] directs that Confirmation sacramental catechesis should be "developmentally appropriate and include retreat experiences." The "Retreat" section of the Guidelines offers more specific information.

Top Ten List of Points for Special Emphasis

Compiled below is not an exclusive list of what is most important or in need of attention. However, it is a Top Ten list of issues and errors that have been frequently occurring in Confirmation Masses in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston during the last several years that are worthy of highlighting for correction. It is expected that all parishes will work to address these matters for Confirmations to ensure the integrity and quality of the celebration of the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist.

1. Proper Text for the Rite of Confirmation

On May 15, 2016, the new ritual text for the Order of Confirmation became the normative (mandatory) text for the Sacrament of Confirmation in English in the United States. While parishes are reminded of this each year and provided with a digital copy of the revised text from the Office of Worship in their materials, many parishes continue to utilize obsolete texts in their worship aids, binders for clergy, etc. This is happening most frequently with the texts for the Renewal of Baptismal Promises and the Universal Prayer. **Please ensure that in future Confirmation liturgies, the proper texts are used.**

2. Nametags for Confirmandi

The formula for the anointing of Confirmation is: “N., be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit.” As the name of the candidate is part of this formula, it is important that the minister of the Sacrament have a clear indication of the name to be used. **Please ensure that each person to be confirmed has a name tag that can be easily seen (not covered by hair or garments) and that displays the Confirmation name (and only the Confirmation name) clearly and in a large font.** Please do not list multiple names prominently on the name tag (e.g. Given name, Confirmation Saint, and/or Parish name) as this can cause confusion as to which name is to be used.

3. Confirmation “Stoles”

Candidates for Confirmation are NOT to wear stoles of any color over their shoulders, as this is highly inappropriate. The stole is indicative of a minister ordained through the Sacrament of Holy Orders and is not appropriate for the laity or for candidates for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

4. Lectors at Confirmation Masses

Many parishes wish to involve those being confirmed in liturgical roles during the Mass, such as bringing forward the gifts to the altar. However, a candidate for Confirmation should not be assigned the role of proclaiming the readings of the Mass, unless they are a trained lector who normally serves in this capacity for the parish. **Proclamation of the readings should be done by trained lectors.**

5. Presentation of the Candidates

Following the Gospel and before the Homily, the candidates for Confirmation are presented to the bishop. In the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, **the role of presenting the candidates properly belongs to the pastor of the parish.** If for some reason the pastor is absent from the Confirmation Mass, the parochial vicar or another designated priest should present the candidates. This role should not be given to a Director of Religious Education or a catechist. **Additionally, the candidates should be presented as a group and should not be individually presented by name**

6. Music During Anointing

Depending on the number of candidates to be confirmed, the portion of the ritual with the individual anointings can take a significant amount of time. It is common for the musicians to provide prayerful background instrumentation and sometimes even singing while the anointings take place. However, it is critical that the minister anointing the candidates can communicate with those being anointed and hear their responses, as this part of the ritual. **Therefore, please have musicians refrain from any loud music or singing (especially congregational singing) during this portion of the Mass that might make communication difficult.**

7. Intentions for the Universal Prayer

For Confirmation Masses, the expectation is that the Universal Prayer will follow the ritual text, which contains four specific intentions. For most Masses, especially on weekdays, these should be the only intentions used. On Sundays, Holy Days of Obligation, or in other circumstances where a pastoral need suggests it, 1 or 2 intentions may be added following the four from the ritual. **As the presumption is that there will be four intentions, if there is a plan to add any additional intentions, please discuss this with the bishop and Master of Ceremonies before Mass begins.**

8. Presentation of the Gifts

Following the Universal Prayer the Offertory and Preparation of the Gifts begin. **Those assigned the role of bringing forward the gifts of bread and wine should move to the back of the church during the Universal Prayer so that they are ready to bring forward the gifts as soon as the bishop is ready to receive them.** Gift bearers should begin walking down the aisle as soon as the bishop stands and begins to come forward to meet them. In some parishes, there is a custom to present the money from the collection as part of the offertory (and the presentation of the gifts is therefore delayed until the collection has ended), but for Confirmation Masses this unnecessarily prolongs what is already a lengthy liturgical celebration. Please ensure that the gift bearers are ready in a timely manner and **do not wait for the end of the collection.**

9. Holy Communion Under Both Forms

As of the date of this letter (July 16, 2021), Holy Communion from a common chalice is suspended until further notice, as a precaution against the spread of COVID-19. For the time being, Holy Communion is to be received under the appearance of bread alone, and may be received on the tongue or in the hand.

10. Pastor's Remarks at the End of Mass

Only the pastor may give remarks, acknowledgements, and words of gratitude, whether to the bishop, the liturgical ministers, the catechists, or to anyone else involved in the preparation of the celebration. It is not appropriate for these remarks to be delivered by a Director of Religious Education, catechist, or newly-Confirmed young person. **These remarks are to be brief.** The pastor's remarks are offered immediately following the Prayer After Communion and before the bishop's own remarks and final blessing.

Photo Opportunity after the Confirmation Mass

The practice of taking individual photos with the bishop or visiting priest conferring Confirmation is resuming in the fall of 2021, and throughout the 2021-2022 Confirmation cycle. It is the responsibility of parish staff to organize and carry out the post-Mass photo opportunity.

Please be mindful that in most cases the celebrant is visiting your parish after taking care of his other pastoral responsibilities during the day, and it may take him as long as 45 minutes or an hour to return home. Therefore, the photo opportunity should be carried out in a timely and efficient manner.

Only the newly-Confirmed person and his or her sponsor will be in the photo with the celebrant who conferred Confirmation. No one else is to be included in the photo. Parish staff should communicate this clearly to families, well in advance of the Confirmation liturgy.

Guidelines and Expectations

1. Out of consideration for the celebrant, especially after an evening liturgy, the location of the photo opportunity should not be at a great distance from the parish church.
2. There must be one or two designated photographers arranged by parish staff. **The celebrant's Master of Ceremonies will be present, but he will not serve as a photographer.**
3. Cardinal DiNardo and Bishop Dell'Oro ask that there be two places for taking photos, so that they can move between both places. As they take a photo in one place, the other place is being filled with the next confirmand-sponsor pair, and so forth. These places should be just a few feet from one another. For the preferences of other celebrants, please check with the Office of Worship.
4. At least two parish staff members or volunteers must be present to manage the photo opportunity by keeping the line(s) moving efficiently.
5. The location for the photo opportunity must be clearly communicated by parish staff to the photographer(s), the confirmands and sponsors, and the celebrant's Master of Ceremonies. Everyone should know where they are going.
6. Parish staff should plan ahead for a timely exit of confirmands and sponsors from the church to the location for photos, since the celebrant will go there immediately after the end of Mass. **Try to avoid any unnecessary delays that would cause the celebrant to wait at the photo location for a lengthy period of time.** This might entail a conversation between the Confirmation Coordinator and the parish's Director of Music, to ensure that the recessional hymn is well-timed for the confirmands and sponsors to move quickly from the church to the location of the photo opportunity.
7. The celebrant will not take a group photo in addition to individual photos.
8. For additional clarifications, please contact the Cardinal's priest-secretary at 713-652-8206.