

## **CONFIRMATION PREPARATION IN THE DIOCESE OF MADISON**

### **1. PERSONAL EXPECTATION**

In order to be Confirmed, one must be baptized, of the age of reason, suitably instructed, properly disposed, and able to renew the baptismal promises (CIC 889). It is expected that individuals who are preparing for the sacrament of Confirmation are practicing our faith by weekly Mass attendance and periodic Sacramental Confession.

### **2. PARENT COMMITMENT**

Parents are the primary educators of their children in the faith. It is expected that every parent of a Confirmandi understands the preparation process and joins in committing to help form their child(ren) during this process. (For example, parishes may ask parents to sign a commitment form at the parent information meeting, once they have reviewed the expectation to play a significant role in the Confirmation preparation process.)<sup>1</sup>

### **3. REMOTE PREPARATION**

Remote preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation ideally takes place at least two years prior to the reception of the sacrament. Throughout each of these years, teens are expected to engage in regular, religious education or youth formation. This remote preparation could happen in the parish, in a Catholic school, and/or in the home. This preparation should be focused on providing organic, systematic catechesis, with a particular emphasis on studying the four pillars of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

### **4. IMMEDIATE PREPARATION**

In the two semesters leading to Confirmation, there should be 15 hours of immediate preparation offered for the sacrament of Confirmation in the home parish, a Confirmation retreat (or other retreat) is to be participated in.

### **5. ONE ON ONE INTERVIEW**

In order to ensure that the candidate has been suitably instructed and is properly disposed, the pastor should meet one-on-one with each person seeking the sacrament. This conversation should include a review of the baptismal promises the candidate will renew at their Confirmation, so as to ensure basic knowledge of the Church's teachings and intent to live according to those teachings. Ideally this happens midway through the preparation process, in case the suggestion is made to delay reception of the sacrament.

### **6. CURRICULUM MATERIALS**

Every parish is expected to follow the curriculum guidelines for Confirmation. The Office of Evangelization and Catechesis is available to consult on which materials would be suitable tools to teach according to those guidelines.

The preparation of children for the reception of the sacraments is a work of cooperation between pastors and parents, each of whom has, in his own way, both the right and the duty of educating Christian children. The Church joyfully affirms that parents are the "principal and first educators of their children" (CCC 1653) and the "first heralds" for them of the Gospel (CCC 2225). Yet this primary right of parents to educate their children is not absolute. In matters of faith and morals, it is subordinate to the authority of the Church. For Christian education "belongs preeminently to the Church," (Pope Pius XI, On Christian Education, 15) both because of the authority given to her by Christ to teach all nations (Matt 28:18-20) and because she is the spiritual mother of all those who are born of the waters of Baptism (Pope Pius XI, On Christian Education, 16-17). Just as parents have a natural right and duty to educate the children born to them by nature, so also the Church has a supernatural right and duty to educate all the children born to her by grace. All the Christian faithful have a right to receive the sacraments, and hence cannot be denied the sacraments as long as they

fulfill the basic requirements of canon law. Parents and pastors together are responsible for ensuring that children receive suitable instruction prior to reception of the sacraments, but it is for the pastor to judge that the children are properly disposed and suitably instructed, in accord with the canonical norms, before allowing them to receive the sacraments.

## **7. PASTORS AND PARENTS**

Pastors and parents alike should not be content with merely fulfilling minimum requirements, but should seek to provide vigorous and robust catechesis aimed at a deeply rooted and lively faith. Parents and pastors are called to work harmoniously together in fulfilling the evangelizing mission of the Church, taking joint responsibility for the sacramental preparation of children, as well as for the good of the whole parish. Thus, parents ought to carefully discern their call to enrich the parish community through their engagement and active participation in parish catechetical programs, and pastors ought to, while acknowledging and respecting the rights and freedoms of the family, gently encourage them to use their gifts for the advancement of the whole parish community.

## **8. NAME AT CONFIRMATION**

It is a common pious practice to select the name a Saint or Blessed to take at their Confirmation; this choice is often of a member of the Church triumphant the confirmand would like the intercession of or one whom they desire to emulate. Bishop Hying will likely ask each Confirmand about the name they chose before they are Confirmed. Confirmandi should be well prepared for that brief conversation.

## **9. LETTERS OF INTENT**

Bishop Hying would like for letters to be written to him by all Confirmandi. They should be mailed directly in one packet to the Bishop at least 30 days prior to the date of Confirmation. Please do not fold the letters nor place them in individual envelopes. Letters of intent MIGHT include:

- The candidate's desire to be confirmed.
- Sharing their faith: past and present.
- What effects they hope the sacrament of Confirmation has on their faith and lives in the future.
- How they see themselves participating in the mission of the Church after receiving the sacrament.
- Candidate letters should be read by the pastor to ensure that the letter requests the Sacrament and that the person is acting freely.

Bishop Hying personally reads each letter so that he can better know the thoughts, concerns, and desires of young people.

## **10. SPONSOR INVOLVEMENT & FORMATION**

Each person who is seeking the Sacrament of Confirmation is to choose a sponsor, according to canons 874, 892, and 893. Following those guidelines, Confirmandi should choose a sponsor who is fit to participate with them in the formation leading up to the sacrament. (For example, they may attend formation sessions, go to Mass together, pray together at Adoration, make plans to go to Confession together, and check in with each other regularly.).

## **11. RETREAT**

Regular retreats are helpful and encouraged as a spiritual practice in the lives of the faithful. Specifically, kerygmatic retreats can be fruitful in helping someone come to know Jesus Christ and follow him.

## **12. MISSIONARY FORMATION**

Being a Catholic involves a lifelong commitment to discipleship and mission. While the hope is that every person who presents themselves for Confirmation takes that seriously, Confirmandi will be required to participate in 15 hours of service or mission work within the parish as part of the preparation process.