

RESOURCE FOR ADULT CONFIRMATION

Diocese of St. Augustine (updated, June 2015)

The preparation and formation of adults who present themselves for confirmation, has long been a challenge for pastoral ministers. These candidates do not readily fit into the programs and processes already in place: too old for high school programs, too specialized for general adult formation programs. Materials and programs designed for adult confirmands are nearly non-existent. Aware of the need to provide some help in this area the Office of Christian Formation in conjunction with the Office of Liturgy and the Sacramental Guidelines Committee has developed these guidelines and resources for the formation of adults seeking confirmation. This packet is the result of that effort.

It should be noted at the outset that no packet such as this will meet all the needs of everyone who consults it. The effort here was to try to bring some order to the chaos of adult confirmation preparation by:

- naming the populations and the needed formation
- pulling together in one place the sacramental, ritual and catechetical guidelines that exist in different sources
- providing an annotated listing of catechetical resources that may be useful to catechists

The audience to whom this packet is addressed is almost as diverse as the adult confirmation candidates themselves. Pastors, parish directors, deacons, directors of religious education, adult and family ministers, young adult ministers, catechists and others may each make use of these pages. For this reason, information which may seem obvious to some may be included for the benefit of others. Our hope is that each group will take what they need for their ministry.

AN OVERVIEW OF FORMATION FOR ADULT CONFIRMATION

The term “Adult Confirmation” as used in this document refers to Roman Catholics who have been baptized, have celebrated their first Communion and are seeking to celebrate their confirmation at an age later than the usual age for confirmation in the Diocese of St. Augustine (ages 13-17). Baptized Christians seeking the full communion of the Catholic Church are properly referred to as candidates for full communion and are not the subject of these guidelines. (See RCIA)

Those involved in preparation of adults for confirmation tell us about at least five different populations that they serve. While not mutually exclusive, naming and describing these populations does help to focus better on the work that needs to be done. The five major groups may be described as follows:

1. **Active and formed.** Members of this group may have missed their confirmation celebration because of external factors, such as a move, scheduling difficulties or some family matter. They are active and participating members of their parishes and highly motivated to celebrate the sacrament. Most often they are well-catechized and in need of little formation.
2. **Present but not entirely formed.** Many in this group also missed their confirmation celebration because of external factors. They approach this process as something they are finally getting around to, but are not highly motivated. For them, it is more a sense of duty, of

crossing off an item on a list. They attend Mass, some even regularly, but are not active members of their parishes. They are in need of both “awakening” (see below) and formation.

3. **About to be married.** These people typically show up because they have been told that it is a good idea to be confirmed before they marry or that they must be confirmed before they marry. (see Question #6 on page 8). They are generally in their twenties and many, but not all, have not been regularly attending Sunday Mass nor participating actively in their parish life. Some do not come willingly and may present a “get this over with quickly” attitude. Many in this group, even though they may have had up to twelve years of religious education, are in need of “awakening” (see page 3) and basic catechesis.
4. **Alienated and returning.** These come at any age and stage in life. They may have had a strongly negative experience with the church and deliberately chosen to stay away, or they may have simply been apathetic about their membership in the Catholic church. There is a motivating factor at work here: children receiving sacraments, encouragement of a friend or significant other, change in life situation, etc. They are also likely to need some formation, but many will be more receptive to it than some members of the marriage group above.
5. **18-22 years old just out of high school program.** Members of this group fall into any of the above categories. They most often show up in campus ministry programs, although some may respond to special initiatives extended to them by parishes, especially in the summertime.

There are a variety of needs that candidates for adult confirmation present when they approach us. No single process or method will be able to address all those needs. Nevertheless, a well-thought-out program should contain the following elements:

“Awakening” The most fundamental catechesis addresses the relationship between the candidate and God, and the relationship between the candidate and the faith community, based on the Good News as proclaimed in Scripture. The process by which a candidate becomes aware of and respond to God’s invitation to a loving and nourishing relationship may be termed “awakening.” Without a strong foundation in this personal relationship with God, further catechesis will be experienced as merely an empty formality eventually to be abandoned.

“Formation” This element focuses on information about the church and the faith, and the integration of this information into the life of the individual, especially as part of the faith community. The Rite of Confirmation calls for the same principles to be followed, with suitable adaptation, which are in effect for the admission of catechumens to baptism and the eucharist. (#12) The Rite of Confirmation then cites “paragraph 75” of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults as the major focus of formation for confirmation candidates. The four components of catechesis named therein are catechesis, communal life, worship, and apostolic works.

Sacramental preparation. Catechesis specific to the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation also needs to be provided. What is this sacrament, how it fits in with the other initiation sacraments, what the Church believes about the effects and purpose of confirmation all should be addressed at some point in the formation process.

The emphasis placed on each of these elements may vary depending on the situation of the candidates who present themselves for confirmation. Keeping in mind these populations and elements for catechesis, the following pages offer some more specific guidelines for the preparation of adults for confirmation.

LEARNING STYLES OF ADULTS

It is important to remember the following about adults. They:

- *Evaluate information based on lived experience.*
 - *Are self-directed*
 - *React more positively to information that is readily understandable and usable.*
 - *Are able to ask questions and search for answers.*
 - *Are capable of the fullest expression of faith.*
 - *Express faith through service to others.*
 - *Are able to contribute time, talent, and treasure to the local community and their community of faith.*
 - *Value ritual and prayer.*
- (NCCL “Sowing the Seeds of Faith--the Adult Believer”, NCCL, Washington, DC, 2000)

SIX DIMENSIONS FOR ADULT FAITH FORMATION CONTENT

Holy Scripture and Sacred Tradition form the core content of all adult catechesis for the Church has always considered them the “supreme rule of faith.” Sacred Scripture provides the starting point for reflecting on the faith , while the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* serves as the “reference for the authentic presentation of the content of faith.” Use of Scripture and the *Catechism* help adults grasp the content of the faith as well as its application to daily Christian living. (paraphrased from *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*, USCCB, 1999)

In the *General Directory for Catechesis* it is stated, “The maturation of the Christian life requires that it be cultivated in all its dimensions:

- ◆ knowledge of the faith
- ◆ liturgical life
- ◆ moral formation
- ◆ prayer
- ◆ belonging to community and
- ◆ missionary spirit.

When catechesis omits one of these elements, the Christian faith does not attain full development.” (GDC #84-87) The scope of catechetical content is always cognitive, experiential and behavioral and requires a balance of word, memory and witness. Concrete approaches to the six dimensions of mature faith formation would include several approaches, including:

- ✠ Formation through liturgy
- ✠ Family or Home Centered Activities

- ✠ Small Group
- ✠ Large Group
- ✠ Individual Activities

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

PARAGRAPH 75

The catechumenate is an extended period during which the candidates are given suitable pastoral formation and guidance, aimed at training them in the Christian life¹. In this way, the dispositions manifested at their acceptance into the catechumenate are brought to maturity. This is achieved in four ways.

1. A **suitable catechesis** is provided by priests or deacons, or by catechists and others of the faithful, planned to be gradual and complete in its coverage, accommodated to the liturgical year, and solidly supported by celebrations of the word. This catechesis leads the catechumens not only to an appropriate acquaintance with dogmas and precepts but also to a profound sense of the mystery of salvation in which they desire to participate.
2. As they become familiar with the **Christian way of life** and are helped by the example and support of sponsors, godparents, and the entire Christian community, the catechumens learn to turn more readily to God in prayer, to bear witness to the faith, in all things to keep their hopes set on Christ, to follow supernatural inspiration in their deeds, and to practice love of neighbor, even at the cost of self-renunciation. Thus formed, “the newly converted set out on a spiritual journey. Already sharing through faith in the mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection, they pass from the old to a new nature made perfect in Christ. Since this transition brings with it a progressive change of outlook and conduct, it should become manifest by means of its social consequences and it should develop gradually during the period of the catechumenate. Since the Lord in whom they believe is a sign of contradiction, the newly converted often experience divisions and separations, but they also taste the joy that God gives without measure.”²
3. The Church, like a mother, helps the catechumens on their journey by means of suitable **liturgical rites**, which purify the catechumens little by little and strengthen them with God’s blessings. Celebrations of the word of God are arranged for their benefit, and at mass they may also take part with the faithful in the liturgy of the word, thus better preparing themselves for their eventual participation in the liturgy of the eucharist. Ordinarily, however, when they are present in the assembly of the faithful they should be kindly dismissed before the liturgy of the eucharist begins (unless their dismissal would present practical or pastoral problems). For they must await their baptism, which will join them to God’s priestly people and empower them to participate in Christ’s new worship (see no. 67 for formularies of dismissal).
4. Since the **Church’s life is apostolic**, catechumens should also learn how to work actively with others to spread the Gospel and build up the Church by the witness of their lives and by professing their faith.³

¹ See Vatican Council II, Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity, *Ad gentes*, no. 14.

² *Ibid*, no. 13.

³ See Vatican Council II, Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity, *Ad gentes*, no. 14.

GROUPS WITH DIFFERING NEEDS: POSSIBLE APPROACHES

This section presents possible ways to approach the formation of candidates for adult confirmation. Experiences and resources vary from parish to parish and candidate to candidate, so it is important to emphasize that no single approach will fit every adult who is preparing for confirmation. With that in mind the following approaches are offered as starting points, providing possible parameters for each group named earlier as your parish designs its own formation program.

1. **Active & Formed:**

While members of this group, one initial meeting should determine any areas needing attention that could be addressed in one or more future conversations. Assuming that they are actively participating in Sunday worship and have continuously been participating members of their faith community, it may be possible to have them work with a sponsor for a few sessions or attend an ongoing adult education activity which addresses any needs they may have. It would be very important to assess membership in this group quite carefully, especially since reluctant high school students may view this option as a “shortcut” to confirmation and attempt to opt out of a high school program.

Necessary Elements:

Instruction on the Sacrament of Confirmation

Celebration of reconciliation

Element of service – involvement in ongoing parish service activities

2. **Present but not entirely formed:** 3. **About to be married** 4. **Alienated and returning:**

While there would be elements of the formation process which could be common to groups 3, 4 and 5, an initial interview with the candidate will determine any specific additions to the formation. A general process could consist of a minimum of five group sessions, a review of the basics of Roman Catholicism that might be open to all parish members. Topics should include:

Church: creed, church history, the nature of church

Sacraments and liturgy

Prayer and spirituality

Scripture

Morality

In addition, there should be opportunities for:

Service

Interaction with the parish community (perhaps with the guidance of the sponsor) **IN ADDITION** to regular participation in Sunday worship

Celebration of reconciliation

3. For the alienated and returning, there may need to be an additional pastoral process. They may need a more carefully constructed process of reconciliation, or integration into the parish community. Consider the use of a “Coming Home” or “Remembering Church” process or even the use of the “Order of Penitents.”

ADULT CONFIRMATION: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. For the purposes of adult confirmation, what is the definition of an adult?

Canon law defines an adult as a person who has completed the eighteenth year of age (Canon 97) and does not lack the use of reason (Canon 99).

2. What adults are eligible for confirmation?

Those adults who:

- are baptized into the Roman Catholic church (those baptized in another Christian church are eligible for confirmation through the Rite of Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church, and are not the subject of these guidelines)
- have celebrated their First Communion
- are not presently barred from the sacraments (most commonly for reasons relating to an irregular marriage situation)
- are capable of renewing their baptismal promises

Generally, this guideline refers to persons who are baptized Catholics who have received some catechesis within the Catholic Christian community. These are active adult Catholics who for some reason did not receive Confirmation at the usual age. Proof of their baptism comes in the form of a copy of their baptismal certificate obtained from their parish of baptism.

3. How should adults be prepared for confirmation?

In the *Rite of Confirmation*, paragraph 12, it states that “suitable catechesis” should precede confirmation. Candidates are to have strong enough ties to the Christian community and with individuals within the community for effective catechesis. Their formation should assist the candidates

- to bear witness in Christian living
- in carrying on the apostolate
- in increasing their desire to share in the Eucharist

In other words, catechesis should not only provide information but also formation in living the Christian life. Catechesis helps to develop the relationship between the candidate and God, and the relationship between the candidate and the faith community. The formation should include the four components developed in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, paragraph 75:

- catechesis
- community life
- worship
- apostolic works

Attention is to be paid to the needs of the individual candidate. Some adults may indeed benefit from a process which includes a more basic overview of our Catholic Christian faith. While not strictly required by the Rite itself, this kind of formation may be very helpful, as long as it does not become oppressive or burdensome. A significant element of this approach would be the celebration of the sacrament of Reconciliation. Some communities have also had some success with the

development of an “Order of Penitents,” an extended process of reconciliation that results in a return to the Eucharistic table for those candidates who are returning to the practice of their faith.

4. Should these adults be included with the candidates and catechumens?

In general, these adults should be prepared separately from catechumens and candidates for full communion, as their situation, issues and faith journey may differ substantially from those of the unbaptized and of candidates for full communion. Practically, there may be elements of initiation catechesis from which candidates for confirmation would benefit. In these cases, it might be possible to include confirmation candidates in these sessions occasionally. The distinction should be carefully made as to their status, and care taken as to the dynamic of the group.

It must be recognized that the difficulty in making the distinctions between the status of the adult confirmation candidates and catechumens and candidates for full communion presents great challenges for the catechist. The essential nature of the grace of baptism is such that it is generally recommended that catechumens be catechized separately from candidates for full communion. By extension, an adult candidate for confirmation already shares in the worship and at the table of the Catholic Christian faith community and so is best catechized separately. ***Confirmation candidates are never included in any of the rituals meant for catechumens and candidates, such as the Rite of Election, Scrutinies, Rite of Acceptance or Welcoming, etc.***

5. Are candidates for adult confirmation required to make a retreat, complete service hours, take a confirmation name or write a letter to the bishop?

Retreats and service are certainly elements of solid preparation for life within the Christian community and can be very valuable experiences for candidates. Care must be taken that retreats and service, if included in the preparation process, not be oppressive or burdensome. The taking of another name for confirmation and a letter to the bishop would not be necessary.

6. Is confirmation required for marriage in the Church?

No. Canon 1065.1 states: “If they can do so without serious inconvenience, Catholics who have not yet received the sacrament of confirmation are to receive it before being admitted to the sacrament of marriage.” If possible confirmation should be celebrated before marriage if the candidate can be adequately prepared. If this is impossible, then the wedding is to proceed, but the person should be prepared and confirmed as soon as possible after marriage.

7. When is the best time to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation?

While the rite of confirmation permits its celebration at any time of year, the most appropriate time is during the Easter season because of its traditional focus on the sacraments of initiation.

Given this clear preference in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults for reserving the Easter Vigil to the initiation of the unbaptized, the celebration of Confirmation is best left to another time during the Easter season. While any Sunday of the Easter season would be appropriate, Pentecost, with its particular celebration of the Holy Spirit and its long tradition of association with Christian initiation, would be a primary choice. If for some reason this is not possible,

then other Sundays with appropriate readings would be suitable. In any case, this should be a public celebration where a large portion of the faith community is gathered.

8. Should adults be confirmed with the youth of our community?

While adults may be confirmed at parish or regional celebrations of confirmation of teenagers, for pastoral reasons related to their age, maturity and relationship to the parish community it is preferable that they be confirmed at a separate celebration. Two annual adult confirmations are celebrated in the Diocese of St. Augustine, one at the mother church of the diocese in St. Augustine and one in Gainesville.

9. What is the role of the sponsor in adult confirmation?

The role of the sponsor is that of faith companion. In small parishes with limited resources, the sponsor may be a valuable resource in the catechetical preparation of the candidate as well.

Requirements for sponsors:

- be at least 16 years old
- be a confirmed Catholic who has received the sacrament of Eucharist and leads a life in harmony with the faith and the role to be undertaken
- not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared
- not be the father or mother of the one confirmed
- it is desirable that the confirmation sponsor, if possible, be the baptismal sponsor of the one confirmed (Canon 893.2)

10. Who may confirm adult candidates for confirmation, and what documentation is required?

The ordinary minister of confirmation is the bishop. There is a form attached to this packet that is used for registration for the two annual adult confirmations held in the Diocese of St. Augustine. Each parish is responsible for providing these completed forms to the Office of Christian Formation within six weeks of the celebration. The information on these forms will be used to record the confirmation at the parish where the Confirmation is held. Churches of Baptism will be notified by the Office of Christian Formation. Also attached is a sample delegation letter for use when you have baptized Catholic, but uncatechized adults in your RCIA process.

RESOURCES

Code of Canon Law

Rite of Confirmation

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

**RESOURCES ON BASIC CATHOLIC BELIEFS
Useful for Adult Confirmation Preparation**

1. BOOKS USEFUL WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE ACTIVE AND FORMED

A Well-Built Faith: A Catholic's Guide to Knowing and Sharing What We Believe by Joe Paprocki, Loyola Press, 2008

Una Fe Bien Construida: Guia Catolica Para Conocer y Compartir Lo Que Creemos by Joe Paprocki, Loyola Press, Spanish translation 2010

Believing in Jesus: A Popular Overview of the Catholic Faith by Leonard Foley, O.F.M. St. Anthony Messenger Press, 5th edition 2009

Catholic Essentials: An Overview of the Faith,. Michael Amodei. Ave Maria Press. 2009

Catholic Questions, Wise Answers by Michael J. Daley, St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2002

Catholic Updates, St. Anthony Messenger Press. Monthly four-page bulletin-sized (8 ½ x 11) publication on numerous subjects of Catholic belief and practice. Sourcebooks of past publications are available.

Catholicism: Now I Get It, Claire Furia Smith. Our Sunday Visitor, 2005

Catecismo Católico de los Estados Unidos para los Adultos, USCCB, Tercera impresión 2011

United States Catechism for Adults, USCCB Publishing 9th Printing 2012

What Makes Us Catholic: Eight Gifts for Life, by Thomas H. Groome, Harper and Row, 2002

YouCat, Ignatius Press (for the youth/young adults in the process)

2. **BOOKS USEFUL WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE PRESENT BUT NOT ENTIRELY FORMED**

Catholic Customs and Traditions: A Popular Guide, by Greg Dues, Twenty-Third Publications, 1998 (revised)

Catholic Treasures New and Old: Traditions, Customs and Practices, by Joanne Turpin. St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1994. This handbook explains many of the popular customs, rituals, and devotions of the Catholic way of life. Also, explores the changes in church life since Vatican II.

Invitation to Catholicism: Basic Beliefs + Teachings + Practices, by Alice Camille, ACTA Publications, 2001

Living the Catholic Faith: Rediscovering the Basics by Charles Chaput, O.F.M. Cap. Servant Publications, 2001

The Mystery of Faith: An Introduction to Catholicism by Michael Himes, St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2004 (also available on video and DVD)

United States Adult Catechism for Adults, USCCB, 9th Printing, 2012

Catecismo Católico de los Estados Unidos para los Adultos, USCCB , Tercera impresión 2011

Why Do Catholics Do That? A Guide to the Teachings and Practices of the Catholic Church,

By Dr. Kevin Orlin Johnson, Ballantine Books, 1994

3. BOOKS USEFUL FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE ALIENATED AND RETURNING

Catholics Can Come Home Again: A Guide for the Journey of Reconciliation with Inactive Catholics, by Carrie Kemp, Paulist Press 2001

Choosing to Be Catholic (For the First Time or Once Again) by William J. O'Malley, S.J., RCL, Houston, 2001

Faith Rediscovered: Coming Home to Catholicism, by Lawrence S. Cunningham. Paulist Press, 2001. Though the title refers to returning Catholics, the book is not limited to those persons. "It is also addressed to those Catholics who have never left the church but who live within it in a very tenuous or underdeveloped manner."

While You Were Gone: A Handbook for Returning Catholics (and those thinking about it.) by William J. Bausch, Twenty-third Publications, 2002 (revised)

Why I am Catholic: 21 People Give Their Own Answers, George Szews, ed. ACTA Publications, 1996. This small booklet contains inspiring, real-life accounts of ordinary people. Discussion questions zero in on the reader's experience.

4. BOOKS/PROGRAMS USEFUL FOR PARISH OUTREACH TO PEOPLE WHO ARE ALIENATED AND RETURNING

Alpha for Catholics www.alphausa.org

Catholics Can Come Home Again! A Guide for the Journey of Reconciliation with Inactive Catholics, by Carrie Kemp, Paulist Press, 2001

Catholics Come Home www.catholicscomehome.org

Catholics Coming Home: A Handbook for Churches Reaching Out to Inactive Catholics, by Carrie Kemp and Donald Pologruto. Harper Collins Publishers, 1990. Includes the motivation and a method for conducting an outreach to inactive Catholics.

Catholics Returning Home www.catholicsreturninghome.org

Inviting Catholics Home by Sally Mews, Liguori Publications 2003. Includes a six week support system aimed at helping Catholics return to the Church.

Landings from Paulist Press www.landings-international.org

Time to Listen...a Time to Heal: A Resource Directory for Reaching Out to Inactive Catholics from the United State Catholic Conference, 1999. Based on a nation-wide consultation, this resource describes twelve tested models for outreach to inactive Catholics.

When They Come Home: Ways to Welcome Returning Catholics by Melanie Rigney and Anna M. Lavana. Twenty Third Publications, 2009

RESOURCES FOR THE CATECHIST

The Art of Catechesis: What You Need to Be, Know and Do, by Maureen Gallagher, Paulist Press, 1998. Includes both content and method on Scripture, the church, prayer and ritual, sacraments and living the Christian life. Written in a practical and approachable style.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, Libreria Editrice Vatican, USCC, 1997. Contains the four pillars of Catholicism: The profession of faith, the celebration of the Christian mystery (liturgy), life in Christ (morality), and Christian prayer.

Common Sense Catechesis: Lessons from the Past, Road Map for the Future. Rev. Robert J. Hater, Our Sunday Visitor, 2014.

Forming Intentional Disciples. By Sherry Weddell. Our Sunday Visitor, 2012.

The Way God Teaches. Joseph D. White, PhD, Our Sunday Visitor, 2014

SPONSOR AND TEAM FORMATION BOOKS

Foundations in Faith: Handbook for Sponsors, by Bob Duggan, et al. Resources for Christian Living, 1998. This is a 32-page booklet which includes information on offering a welcoming spirit; sharing the Catholic tradition; listening; introducing ministry; offering friendship and witness.

Guide for Sponsors, by Ron Lewinski, LTP, 2008. Includes: What it means to be a sponsor: traits of an effective sponsor: questions and issues; sponsor's checklist.

BIBLE

The Catholic Bible: Personal Study Edition (NAB). Oxford University Press, 2011. Includes 400 pages of study materials outlining key biblical concepts with discussion guides, a glossary of biblical terms and a complete list of Sunday lectionary readings.

