Preparing for Confirmation: Resources and Guidelines

Archdiocese of Boston

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A collaborative effort of the offices of

Religious Education

Spiritual Development

Worship

Youth Ministry

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2.1 Sacred Scripture:

In the course of God's revelation in the Old Testament, the Hebrew prophets announced that the Spirit of God would rest on the coming Messiah for his saving mission. The New Testament reveals that the descent of the Holy Spirit on Jesus at His Baptism signaled His identity as that long-awaited Messiah. Conceived by the Holy Spirit, Christ, in His life and mission, lived in total communion with the Holy Spirit given Him by the Father. The fullness of this Spirit was to be communicated to the entire messianic people.

Christ often promised the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, a promise fulfilled at Easter and Pentecost. The outpouring of the spirit at Pentecost brought the Paschal Mystery to its completion. Filled with the Spirit, the Giver of life, the apostles proclaimed the Good News; those who believed and were baptized received the gift of the Spirit by the laying on of hands (the beginning of the sacrament of Confirmation). By the gift of the Holy Spirit, believers are united to the mystery of Christ and experience the saving effects of His Cross and Resurrection.

2.2 Doctrine:

Confirmation is a sacrament of Christian initiation and must be seen in its unity with Baptism and Eucharist. Christian initiation remains incomplete without Confirmation and Eucharist. Reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for the completion and strengthening of baptismal grace. At the same time, the grace of Baptism is a grace of free, unmerited election and does not need human ratification to become effective. The effect of the sacrament is the full outpouring of the Holy Spirit as Gift. Confirmation brings an increase and deepening of baptismal grace, which has the following effects:

> *Grounds us more deeply in our divine adoption, unites us more firmly to Christ, strengthens the gifts of the Holy Spirit given to us at Baptism, perfects our relationship with the Church, grants the special strength of the Holy Spirit for spreading and defending the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ.*

Confirmation, given only once, imprints an indelible spiritual character, signifying that Christ has marked the Christian with the seal of the Holy Spirit for the sake of Christian witness, and perfecting the common priesthood received in Baptism.

2.3 The Rite of Confirmation:

When Confirmation is celebrated separately from Baptism, the renewal of baptismal promises, which begins the rite of Confirmation expresses both the connection and the distinction of Baptism and Confirmation. The anointing with sacred chrism--the essential rite of the sacrament--is done with the laying on of the hand, and is a sign of consecration expressing and imparting a spiritual seal, the seal of the Holy Spirit. The seal signifies a total belonging to Christ, enrollment in Christ's service forever, and the divine promise of protection in the ultimate trial. The celebration of Confirmation within the Mass expresses most fully the unity of the sacraments of initiation and the dynamic orientation of Baptism and Confirmation toward Eucharistic participation. The sign of peace expresses the bond of ecclesial communion with the bishop and the whole Church.

Sources for this statement include: The Apostolic Constitution *Divinae Consortium Naturae,* the *Rite of Confirmation, The Catechism of the Catholic Church,* and the *Pastoral Policies and Guidelines of the Archdiocese of Boston.*

PART III

CONFIRMATION CATECHESIS
Elements of Curriculum

"It is important that the candidates have a well developed understanding of the faith and of their own level of faith development." *Guidelines and Policies, Archdiocese of Boston 6061)*

Catechesis for the sacrament of Confirmation should be centered on the meaning of the sacrament as it is expressed in the *Rite of Confirmation* and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The following elements of curriculum are to be carefully included in the preparation of candidates for this sacrament. Pastoral sensitivity ought to be given to the Catholic High School student in light of the preparation and full time religion conducted in the high school in accordance with the Archdiocesan Curriculum Guidelines (*Guidelines and Policies, Archdiocese of Boston, September 29, 1989. p. 6015 part D)*

Catechesis for the sacrament of Confirmation ought to be only a part of the total High School religious education program of the parish.

3.1 Sacraments of Initiation:
Following Christ in the Community of the Church

Theme: Being a Follower of Jesus Christ in the Catholic Community

Goals: To appreciate and respond anew to the baptismal call given by Christ to each Christian: "Come, follow me."

To help the adolescent to understand that reception of the sacraments is a gift from God and acceptance of them is the normal way of response to God's love

To realize that for Catholics, the choice to follow Christ is also a decision for active participation in the life and mission of the Church. The sacrament of Confirmation helps us to make that decision

To understand the meaning of Confirmation as a sacrament of initiation, the lasting effect of the sacrament, and its relationship to Baptism and the Holy Eucharist

To appreciate the sacramental life of the Church, and, in particular, of the Mass (with emphasis on the importance and value of regular, active participation in the Sunday Eucharist)

3.2 Father, Son and Holy Spirit:
God Present and Active in Our Lives

Theme: The Presence and Action of the Holy Trinity in Our Lives

Goals: To recognize the Trinitarian nature of Catholic faith and life

To understand that Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition are together, God's revelation to us

To be familiar with the Bible and to understand basic Catholic doctrine

To recognize our need for salvation, and appreciate the redemption accomplished for us in Christ's Paschal Mystery

To develop an awareness of the presence and activity of God--Father, Son and Holy Spirit--in the life of the Christian through grace

3.3 Confirmation:
The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Theme: The Holy Spirit Who Strengthens and Sustains Us

Goals: To understand that the Holy Spirit strengthens us as individual believers and as Church

To know and appreciate the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit as divine sources of strength and sustenance in the Christian life

To learn ways of remaining open to the power of the Holy Spirit, growing in relationship with God through prayer and reflection on the Scriptures

3.4 Living Witnesses:
The Challenge of Confirmation

Theme: Living as Christ's People in the World

Goals: To understand and appreciate that we have been created by God to be happy in Christ's freedom

To appreciate the intrinsic relationship between faith as professed in creed and celebrated in sacrament, and faith as lived in the midst of the moral complexities and challenges of our world

To accept the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes as God's revealed norms and guides for Christian moral living

To understand the role of the Church as moral teacher, and the Catholic's responsibility to live by a conscience formed according to the teaching of Christ and his Church on Life and love.

To value the Sacrament of Penance/Reconciliation as a graced moment of encounter with the merciful Christ.

3.5 Celebrating the Liturgy of Confirmation:
Elements of Liturgical Catechesis

Theme: The Sacrament of Confirmation:
"Be Sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit"

Goals: To appreciate the meaning of receiving the sacrament of Confirmation through study of its liturgical elements

To be prepared for the renewal of baptismal vows and the profession of faith

To participate consciously and actively in the celebration of the liturgy of Confirmation

Note: In the spirit of the current initiation practice of the Church, a period of post-confirmation catechesis or mystagogy should be provided to assist the newly confirmed in their continuing formation as followers of Christ in the Catholic Church

PART IV

SPIRITUALITY

"Spiritual progress tends toward [an] ever more intimate union with Christ. This union is called 'mystical' because it participates in the mystery of Christ through the sacraments – 'the holy mysteries' and, in him, in the mystery of the Holy Trinity." (CCC 2014)

4.1 Introduction:

Adolescents live in a society where there is little quiet. This lack of quiet in their lives leads many to think of prayer and reflection as difficult. Peer pressure does not help the situation. It sometimes insinuates that one *should not have* a spiritual side. At the same time, it is only within moments of quiet prayer that they have an opportunity to reflect on themselves, their Church, and their relationship with God. Young people need the chance to use quiet moments as vehicles for growth, change, and conversion as they enter new phases of life. Confirmation preparation seems the perfect time for these opportunities to be introduced and utilized.

Spiritual development is enhanced when established catechetical programs provide experiences of prayer and reflection that nourish true spiritual growth.

4.2 Faith and Spiritual Development:

Spiritual Development is about growth in the life of the Spirit. The presence of Christ in our lives invites us to respond to the Father's call to holiness. Through the Church, in her preaching and sacramental life, we grow in relationship with God. The spirituality of the Confirmation program is about this growth. In a word, the spirituality of Confirmation preparation deepens our relationship with the triune God. Through this relationship started at Baptism, we receive the gift of faith. Faith is a gift destined to grow in the hearts of believers. Adhering to Jesus Christ, in fact, sets in motion a process of continuing conversion, which lasts for the whole of life (*General Directory for Catechesis #56, p49*). Therefore, faith calls us to conversion.

Young people, like everyone else, experience various stages in their faith development. This is important for the catechist to recognize. The typical period of faith development, for the middle adolescent, is one that sees them searching for a deeper meaning and understanding in them, the community they worship with, as well as the community they live in, and ultimately their God. Confirmation preparation calls them to a deeper understanding of their capacity to see God at work in all things.

Teenagers belong to a variety of communities (home, school, friends, work, etc.) and this search for faith touches all of the groups to which they belong. The community that is their Church must reach out to show them that Jesus is present to them in many places and in many ways. Their personal spirituality touches all aspects of their lives.

4.3 Relationship with Jesus and the Church:

This is a time of emotional complexity for the middle adolescent. The catechist might want to invite them to reflect on their affective and cognitive experience during this time. Typically, they need to be aware that God' s presence in their lives can be felt *by way* of these moments. They need to know the person of Jesus and share a relationship with Him. At a time when they are being forced to make so many choices, they need to see Jesus as someone who Himself often turned to prayer. They need to see that Jesus is there, through the Church, to help them make decisions. They need to see Him as *real*. Moments of prayer as well as participation in Sunday Eucharist will help build this relationship.

4.4 Prayer, Reverence and Respect:

The world of the middle adolescent is one that offers a quickened pace of life. The need to be able to occasionally slow down and be aware of Christ's presence is an essential part of the confirmation process. It is only when this personal relationship with God is established, that the middle adolescent is able to view others in light of Jesus. Prayer can enlighten reverence and respect where other educational experiences might not.

God always calls us first. When we answer the God who calls us to holiness, that communication is prayer. When we go out of our way to deepen the relationship started at the time of our baptism, we become open to the power of God's spirit working within us. When we dialogue with the God who loves us and give to Him our needs and hopes, that which has been started in us at Baptism is deepened. When we take the time to open those places in our hearts where we store our hopes and fears, we experience God's power and love. It is during this time of Confirmation preparation that candidates have an opportunity to realize and act on this dynamic call.

Candidates need to be reminded that prayer is the lifting of our hearts, minds, and souls to God. In this way, the Lord helps them to let go of fear and mistrust and proceed through their day filled with His presence and grace. This is because prayer works when we go to our God exactly as we are and give to Him our needs and worries, as well as our hopes and our joys. Prayer places us in the hand of God, who is there to save us from anything that might hurt us. When we pray, we become better people, for we allow ourselves to grow in God's grace. They need to know that their relationship with God has a wonderfully positive effect on their other relationships. We become better friends and family members, better listeners and caregivers.

Prayer helps them to expand their personal repertoire of approaches to God and invites them to hear His voice at different *times* and in different *ways*. Formula prayer, communal prayer, as well as private and meditative prayer offer opportunities that will enable them to respond to the God who first calls us.

4.5 Evangelization:

Spiritual development is by its very nature, evangelization. That is, the carrying forth and living out of the Good News. Teenagers today need to be evangelized. They need to see the connection between the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ and their everyday lives. The most effective tool of youth evangelization is the process of welcome and support, or hospitality.

While searching for their faith identity, adolescents can become confused. They must be made aware of the place Christ and the Church play in their lives. Communication, learned in the domestic Church of the home, must be translated to a language of parish Church. This is what prayer for them is about. They must be given opportunities to hear of the importance of relationship with Jesus and be given the chance to express it. This time of spiritual development for the candidates is also a perfect opportunity to renew the faith commitment of their parents and sponsors.

4.6 Spiritual Development and the Confirmation Program:

Participation in prayer during class time, as well as experiences in the Church building, is needed by teens. Confirmation programs should seek to offer moments that allow reflection on the faith they look at, week after week. These moments of prayer should not be merely fleeting moments of emotional bliss, but rather, constructed in such a way that a lasting relationship with a *personal* God is the result. This will occur when teachers have been afforded the opportunity to pray among themselves. Training is needed in this area. When this occurs teachers are better able to offer moments of reflection that show prayer to be at the heart of Christian decision making. It is when catechists appreciate their own spirituality as being integral to personal growth that they will be better able to help young people gain confidence in recognizing their own encounters with the Lord. Days and evenings of prayer, as well as their Confirmation retreat, will aid in their understanding of their individual faith journey. Using the methods of prayer mentioned above, would deepen the relationship that is theirs with God, in Jesus, through the work of the Spirit in the Church.

4.7 Spiritual Needs of the Candidates:

...Support from a faith community
...Ability to take catechetical knowledge to a relational and spiritual level
...An atmosphere that allows them to express their own faith and spirituality
...The opportunity to have this nurturing accomplished in their parish
...Positive affirmation of their current level of development
...Catechists who are unafraid to express and speak of their own faith life
...The ability to participate in the liturgical life of the parish
...Clustering together with young people regionally to express their faith in Large communities

4.8 Response of the Diocese/Parish:

...Further opportunities for new prayer experiences
...Weekend, overnight, daylong retreat experiences (Ref. Sacramental Guidelines, section V, C-'Worship')
...Evenings of prayer that would include scripture, homily and communal prayer (Separate or inclusive of regular class nights)
...Seasonal (Advent, Lent, Pentecost) days of prayer
...Evenings of prayer for candidates and sponsors and/or parents
...Incorporation of candidates and families into Sunday worship
...Prayer evenings calling back past classes (Confirmation reunions!)
...Training in prayer methods for catechists

PART V

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS AND SPONSORS

At the sight of the crowds, [Jesus'] heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd. Then [Jesus] said to his disciples, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest." (Matthew 9: 36-38)

5.1 History and Purpose:

In the early Church, a person might have been drawn to the Christian way of life by the example and lifestyle of Church members. One might have, out of curiosity, approached a member of the Church and asked reasons for their lifestyle change. After careful scrutiny of the inquirer and their motives, that Christian would then bring the questioner to the Christian assembly. The inquirer was then welcomed by the collective membership or community and enrolled in a long period of preparation and instructional formation for membership into the Christian community. The Christian who first brought and introduced the inquirer to the community was then charged (if he/she felt they were equipped) with the responsibility of serving as sponsor of the inquirer throughout this long period. Together they conversed about the Lord Jesus, His way of life, the community of believers, the need to change one's life, prayer, as well as some practices of the community. Over the course of the years, the catechumen was gradually introduced into the Christian life by the community and in particular, the sponsor. The sponsor witnessed to the community regarding the conversion of the candidate and then accompanied the candidate during ritual celebrations. When the person became a member of the faithful at the celebration of the sacraments, the sponsor was present. Together the sponsor and the candidate grew in friendship and in relationship as members of the faithful. (*Walking Together In Faith: A Workbook for Sponsors of Christian Initiation, Thomas H. Morris p.49)*

The purpose of the Parents/Guardians and Sponsors section is to aid the Confirmation program director in discovering possibilities for catechizing the adult sponsors as well as the parents/guardians of the Confirmation candidate. Confirmation preparation is viewed as a teachable moment for these participants. This opportunity could serve to empower these adults to deepen their understanding of the sacrament, its importance in the life of the candidate and the ongoing life of faith formation that the Sacrament of Confirmation fosters in their lives.

5.2 Role of the Parents/Guardians:

The following are guidelines for the Parent/Guardian of a candidate for the Sacrament of Confirmation as well as opportunities for adult religious formation:

1. Parents/Guardians ought to live out the commitment made at the child's baptism, when they accepted the "responsibility of training them in the practice of the faith." (*Rite of Baptism for Children)* Parents/Guardians should be open to continued and renewed growth in their own faith through participation in the sacramental life of the Church, especially in regular Sunday celebration of the Eucharist, and in daily prayer. Parents/Guardians should make every effort to be involved in the parish Confirmation preparation program for their children. (*Archdiocese of Boston Pastoral Guidelines and Policies, Book II p. 6018*)

2. Parents/Guardians take seriously their responsibility as primary educators of their children and raise them in the practice of the Catholic faith. This includes providing for a formal program of instruction in Catholic doctrine, and promoting family participation in the liturgical life of the Church. (*Archdiocese of Boston Pastoral Guidelines and Policies, Book II, p. 6017 as taken from the National Catechetical Directory, #119*)

3. Parents/Guardians ought to give prayerful support and encouragement to the candidate in matters pertaining to the practice of the Catholic faith.

4. Parents/Guardians should support the candidate through Confirmation preparation and continue that support in post-confirmation continuing faith development. This involves an appreciation of the sacramental life of the Church and an understanding of what that means in the candidate's everyday life (e.g., moral decision making).

5.3 Role of The Godparent/Sponsor:

It is presumed that every effort will be made to engage a Baptismal Godparent in her/his role as Sponsor.

The following are guidelines for the sponsor of a candidate for the Sacrament of Confirmation as well as opportunities to continue her/his religious formation:

1. The sponsor must be a confirmed member living a life in harmony with the Catholic Church (*Code of Cannon Law, Canon 874*), and be, if possible, the same person who served as the candidate's godparent at Baptism. (*Code of Canon Law, Canon 893)*

If there is a valid reason why the Baptismal Godparent is not available (e.g., death, a non-practicing Catholic) then a sponsor should be chosen with the following considerations:

2. The sponsor ought to be a living witness to the Catholic faith through regular participation in the sacramental life of the Church.

3. The sponsor should have an ongoing, caring relationship with the candidate, not only during the Confirmation preparation process, but also after the reception of the sacrament.

4. The sponsor ought to communicate to the candidate the importance of daily prayer, regular reception of the sacraments, Christian service, and all else that pertains to the preparation process, as well as to continued Catholic living after reception of the sacrament.

5. The sponsor should have a good working knowledge of the candidate's readiness for reception of the sacrament to testify in the candidate's behalf. (This presumes that the sponsor has met and discussed matters of faith with the candidate.)

6. The candidate is the proper one to choose her/his sponsor. The Confirmation catechist *should not* be appointed as the sponsor for a class by the parish pastoral staff and supplant the unique relationship that should develop through this process. It is however acceptable for a candidate to chose a catechist as sponsor. No one person may be used as sponsor for an entire group of confirmation candidates

5.4 Recommendations:

1. Sponsors might be encouraged to write a letter to the Confirmation Coordinator expressing their willingness to participate fully in the formation journey with their candidate.

2. The candidate's chosen sponsor might write a letter stating said sponsor's willingness to assume the role of sponsor. This could include an acknowledgment that the aspirant for sponsor anticipates a continuing and/or renewed commitment to Catholic sacramental life.

3. Parents/Guardians and sponsors should be encouraged to take part in opportunities for personal spiritual enrichment that might include: days/evenings of prayer and reflection, workshops, retreats, service opportunities, adult education classes, collaborative programs with other parishes, regional events. Some of these occasions may be offered jointly with the confirmandi; others would be exclusively for the adult sponsors and/or parent/guardians. It is recommended that three such enrichment opportunities per year be offered for the sponsors and parents/guardians

4. The parents/guardians and sponsors might be invited to participate in the final interview process with the candidate to attest to the candidate's readiness for reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation.

5. The sponsor might be encouraged to keep a journal during Confirmation preparation, highlighting key moments of spiritual growth and understanding of their candidate that occur during this period.

PART VI

SERVICE

"I, your Lord and Teacher, have just washed your feet. You, then, should wash one another's feet. I have set an example for you, so that you will do just what I have done for you" (John 13. 14-15).

6.1 Rationale:

(*It should be noted that service is not a condition for reception of the sacrament of Confirmation.*)

In many ways, programs which prepare candidates to receive the sacrament of Confirmation follow the formative path which Jesus lived with his apostles and disciples. To prepare for the Sacrament of Confirmation is to be formed as disciples of the Lord Jesus. An important component of this formative path is contained in the invitation to follow Jesus' life of service: "I have come to serve, not to be served."

Programs which prepare the young to receive the sacrament of Confirmation hold the serving aspect of discipleship to be a very important part of following Jesus as Lord. For this reason, all candidates for the sacrament are expected to experience moments of service during the course of their preparation for Confirmation. These opportunities for service should not be viewed as requirements quite distinct from the sacrament of Confirmation itself. Rather, they should be seen as an essential part of the candidates' formation in discipleship.

Given the purpose of service opportunities within Confirmation preparation programs it should be clear that the number of hours spent in service is a very minor consideration when structuring service experiences of candidates for Confirmation. Quite to the contrary, the essential criteria to be followed in structuring these experiences is that of following the model provided by Jesus in serving the poor and the needy. Rather than using a clock to determine the validity of this activity (by requiring 'service hours'), Confirmation preparation program leaders must use a compass to determine whether this service experience directs their young along the formative path that Jesus laid out for his disciples.

The model for service opportunities within Confirmation preparation programs has to be that of Jesus. Soon after calling His apostles to follow Him, Jesus sent them forth to serve the poor and the lowly (cf., Matthew 10. 5-10). Later, Jesus called seventy-two disciples to follow Him. Jesus began their preparation as disciples by sending them out two by two to every town and place where He was about to go. These apostles and disciples were sent in the name of Jesus to bring the good news to the sick, the dying, the unclean, and those possessed. They were to serve the poor and the lowly in total reliance upon God's saving power. These apostles and disciples were to share the lives of the people they were sent to serve. By the service they rendered in faith, all people would come to know that God's Kingdom was near.

Upon returning to Jesus from this period of service, the apostles and disciples were filled with the joy of following the Lord Jesus. They gathered around Jesus and shared their experiences with him (Luke 10. 17-20). They took strength from the shared witness of their lives and the clarifying instruction offered by Jesus.

Jesus led His apostles and disciples through this faith-centered experience of service as a way of preparing them to be his followers. At the end of their time in service, Jesus was filled with great joy at the things His Father had revealed to these apostles and disciples through the Holy Spirit (cf. Luke 10. 21-24).

6.2 The Structure of Service Programs:

Confirmation preparation program leaders follow the example of Jesus when providing service opportunities for their students. Keeping in mind the role which service experiences can have in developing a sense of discipleship, these leaders take great care to model their service programs on the way Jesus called His disciples. In an age when service programs are being sponsored by a great variety of agencies (for a great variety of purposes), it is essential that Confirmation preparation programs keep a clear focus on the formative process which is being fostered in this specific type of service program.

Service opportunities in Confirmation preparation programs are structured in ways that foster the candidates' growth as disciples of the Lord Jesus. To that end, leaders of Confirmation preparation programs take great care in choosing appropriate service opportunities, in preparing their young participants, and in providing a formative quality to the overall service experience.

6.3 The Choice of Appropriate Service Opportunities:

Service opportunities for Confirmation preparation programs are chosen after taking into consideration a variety of factors.

The type of service chosen for this formative program should follow closely the example and teachings of Jesus. Both in His instruction to the new disciples and in the final instruction before His passion, Jesus made it clear that discipleship was to be measured by the way His followers tended to the needs of the least of their brothers and sisters. Unless they fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, welcomed strangers, clothed the naked, visited the sick and those in prison, they could not be part of the kingdom (cf. Matt. 25. 34-46).

For this reason, leaders of Confirmation preparation programs organize their service experiences around the Corporal Works of Mercy (*Code of Canon Law* #2447):

Corporal Works of Mercy	**Some Examples of Service**
- Feed the hungry	soup kitchen, food bank
- Shelter the homeless	repair or build houses (e.g., Habitat)
- Clothe the naked	deliver clothes to the needy
- Visit the sick and imprisoned	visit the homebound, infirmed, and/or aged
- Bury the dead	clean up a cemetery

Locations for service opportunities are chosen in light of the mission of the agency and the willingness of the agency staff to share their call to and passion for service with the young candidates. These young participants must never be made to feel as though they are merely providing free labor.

Service experiences which direct young people to specific ministries in the parish (e.g., serving as lector, teaching catechesis) or to humanitarian projects (e.g., cleaning up a public beach) are noble and worthwhile. However, they miss the more basic purpose established for the service component in Confirmation preparation programs: forming young people as disciples of the Lord Jesus by serving the poor and the lowly. Clearly, parish leaders who ask candidates, as part of their preparation for Confirmation, to fulfill tasks which no one else in the parish wants to perform (e.g., cleaning up after a parish social or bingo) are subverting the important purposes which service opportunities fulfill within Confirmation preparation programs.

6.4 A Preparation Appropriate to the Service Being Offered:

Confirmation preparation programs take care to prepare their young candidates for their service experiences. This preparation would include an introduction to the service location, guidelines for the time spent in serving the poor, some skills to be used with that type of service, and a moment of prayer for God's accompaniment and assistance throughout the service experience.

6.5 A Formative Experience Centered on Community:

Following upon the example of Jesus, Confirmation preparation programs situate service opportunities within a communal experience. Coordinators of these programs gather groups of eight to twelve young candidates, three or four adult leaders, and older young people for a day of serving the poor in the name of Jesus. These groups meet in the early morning of a Saturday or holiday. The participants get acquainted over breakfast. After some time in preparation (see the paragraph above), the participants break into three or four groups, depending on the number of adults. The participants keep to these groupings throughout the service experience.

Upon arriving at the place of service, the young candidates meet with an agency representative for a short welcome and introduction. Each of the small groups is assigned various tasks to perform during the morning session. The entire community takes lunch together. During that time, the groups share their experiences in an informal way. After another period of work, the groups come together for a feed back session with the agency representative.

The participants return to their parish for the conclusion of their service experience. After a period of privately writing their thoughts, the candidates enjoy a simple meal while sharing their stories and impressions of the day. They reflect on scripture (especially on the compassion of Jesus serving the poor). They make their service experience and their faith one by praying informally for the needy people whom they met during the day.

PART VII

CONFIRMATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF YOUTH MINISTRY

A Vision Statement

7.1 Principles of a General Nature:

Confirmation preparation is an integral part of the ministry which a parish offers its young members.

All programs preparing Catholic adolescents to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation have to be viewed as an action of the entire Church community. In light of this reality, Confirmation preparation programs ought to be considered within the context of the comprehensive ministry which a parish offers its young.

The development of Confirmation preparation programs relies on four basic elements: 1) A solid theology of the sacrament; 2) a sound catechetical presentation; 3) a comprehensive parish ministry to the young; 4) an adequate understanding of the development and life situation of the young.

The aims of Confirmation preparation programs have to be viewed as ultimately following the overall goals of parish ministry to and with the young:

A. Foster a maturing faith in Jesus as Lord.
B. Invite the young to full membership in the traditions and life of the Catholic community.
C. Empower the young to serve God's Kingdom of justice and peace.

7.2 Principles of a Programmatic Nature:

Confirmation preparation programs are instituted to pursue objectives specifically related to the sacrament. These focused objectives need to be clear in developing the structure and requirements for Confirmation preparation programs.

In light of these general principles, the more specific goals of Confirmation preparation programs offer what is needed to receive the sacrament with proper knowledge and disposition. These also should be viewed as an integral but limited part of the more comprehensive ministry which the parish *as parish* offers to and with the young. (It should be noted and emphasized that the pastor is the ordinary leadership person of responsibility of the Confirmation program.)

By its very nature, a Confirmation preparation program is incapable of carrying the entire burden of parish ministry to the young. If the goals of a Confirmation preparation program

are extended to embody the entirety of parish ministry to the young, the Catholic community inadvertently truncates the ministry it offers the young by virtue of its mission *(e.g., Confirmation I & II)*.

The structure and guidelines of Confirmation preparation programs ought to be determined by the very nature of the sacrament of Confirmation. The structure of these programs ought to ensure that the candidate has the specific knowledge and proper disposition for receiving Confirmation. The guiding principles for receiving the sacrament should provide indicators that the candidate enters the life and activities of the Catholic community, is open to an ongoing relationship with the Lord Jesus, and has participated in serving God's Kingdom.

A pattern of participation in parish life has to be seen as a primary indicator that a young person is ready to enter a program of Confirmation preparation. All those who are baptized are candidates for Confirmation. This principle presumes that every parish ministers to its young members through a pastoral program which is comprehensive (i.e., expresses its self-understanding as Church). The implications of this principle should apply to the young parishioners who attend Catholic High Schools.

Ultimately, Confirmation preparation programs are most effective when offered within the context of an active parish community. By the very fabric of its community living, the parish community welcomes the young into the life and traditions of the Church. In Confirmation preparation programs, members of the parish community (parents, sponsors, clergy, youth ministers, catechists, and peers) highlight the meaning and implications of this formative experience in light of the sacrament of Confirmation.

The immediate responsibility for coordinating parish programs of Confirmation preparation can be exercised by any one of a number of youth-serving parish leaders (e.g., DRE, YM, Parochial Vicar). However, this program ought to be offered with the active cooperation of all in the parish who minister to and with the young.

7.3 Elements of Confirmation Preparation Programs:

As an integral part of the parish's ministry to and with the young, Confirmation preparation programs will pursue their specific objectives in ways which include the following elements:

1. **Faith Development:**

   Faith development for young people in Confirmation preparation programs should center on fostering a personal relationship between the young and Jesus. The image of the young on pilgrimage with Jesus as friend seems to be most effective in this regard (c.f., *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, John Paul II, p.126).

   Confirmation preparation programs promote faith development among adolescents when they strive to awaken a sense of belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ. They fill out the meaning of the relationship with Jesus by instruction in the traditions of the Church, by providing experiences of prayer and worship, and by calling the young to serve the poor for the sake of God's Kingdom.

2. **Participation in the Church Community:**

Inviting the young to full membership in the Catholic community through Confirmation programs should be rooted in helping the young perceive Jesus as present and active in the Church (cf. *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, p. 126).

To be effective in this regard, Confirmation preparation programs have to be situated with a parish ministry which reaches out to the young, invites and welcomes them to full membership in the Catholic community, and calls them to meaningful participation in the mission of the Church. These parish programs of community building need to have a variety of forms, feature freedom of choice, be totally ecclesial, and be driven by youth needs and interests.

Because of the Church's self-understanding, because of the stated interests of the young, and because of recent experience, active participation in youthful Liturgy is a key element in inviting the young to full membership in the Catholic community.

3. **Service to God's Kingdom:**

Calling the young to service for the sake of God's Kingdom through programs of Confirmation preparation should center on Jesus' call to discipleship.

Programs of service in this regard should respond to situations of real need (cf., Matt. 25. 31-46). They should be experienced within the context of a small community. Prayerful reflection and catechetical instruction must accompany them. They must be part of a more extensive, optional program of service opportunities made available to all young parish members throughout the year.

7.4 Adolescent Development:

The age that is determined for adolescents to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation (later sophomore or junior year) is challenging for both the parish minister and the young. Faith development theorists offer a way of understanding the struggles which characterize many (if not all) Confirmation preparation programs. The period which most of Confirmation preparation occurs is exactly the time when the young are making the transition from the dynamic of just belonging to a certain group and the quest for personal faith convictions. Just as the Church is inviting the young to a fuller participation in their baptismal identity, many of the candidates are searching for new ways to relate with God and His people.

Some attention ought to be given to the catechist for developing the faith of young people during this time of transition. Parish leadership and catechists in Confirmation preparation programs need some preparation for dealing with this complex period in the lives of the young.

PART VIII

PASTORAL NOTES FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE RITE OF CONFIRMATION

"The sharing in the divine nature received through the grace of Christ bears a certain likeness to the origin, development, and nourishing of natural life. The faithful are born anew by Baptism, strengthened by the sacrament of Confirmation, and finally are sustained by the food of eternal life in the Eucharist. By means of these sacraments of Christian initiation, they thus receive in increasing measure the treasures of divine life and advance toward the perfection of charity." (Apostolic Constitution on the Sacrament of Confirmation Pope Paul VI, 1971)

8.1 Normally, the sponsor for Confirmation is one of the Candidate's original godparents:

Why: The ritual for Confirmation states, "it is desirable that the godparent at baptism, if available, also be the sponsor at Confirmation." "This change expresses more clearly the link between Baptism and Confirmation and also makes the function and responsibility of the sponsor more effective." (*Rite of Confirmation #5*)

8.2 As a rule, Confirmation takes place within the celebration of Mass:

Why: This rule is set "in order that the fundamental connection of this sacrament with all of Christian initiation may stand out in clearer light. Christian initiation reaches its culmination in the communion of the Body and Blood of Christ. The newly confirmed therefore participate in the Eucharist, which completes their Christian initiation." (*Rite of Confirmation #13*)

8.3 The confirming bishop will ordinarily be the main celebrant of the Mass:

Why: The Rite of Confirmation (#13) presumes this to be the normal practice. The ritual intends to show the integrity of the Eucharist as the completion of initiation. Confirmation is to orient us toward the table of the Eucharist. Therefore, the minister who confers Confirmation is the main celebrant of the Eucharist for that celebration. Paul VI wrote in the Apostolic Constitution, *Divinae Consortium Naturae*, approving The new Rite of Confirmation, "the aim of this work has been that the intimate connection of this sacrament with the whole of Christian initiation may stand out more clearly." The Ceremonial of Bishops, recognizing this point, says in #458, "It is eminently fitting that the bishop celebrate this Mass."

8.4 The Ritual Mass for Confirmation will be used only when permitted, namely on Sundays in Ordinary Time and Sundays of Christmas and on feasts, memorials, and ferial days. The Mass of the day will be used on the Sundays of Advent, Lent, and Easter, during the Easter Octave, and on solemnities. When the Mass of the day is used the Scripture readings of the day will also be used:

Why: The arrangement for celebrating the liturgical year is governed by the General Calendar for use in the entire Roman Rite. Precedence among liturgical days relative to the celebration is governed by the 'Table of Precedence'.
(*General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar #48 and #59; Ceremonial of Bishops, Appendix III*)

8.5 After the Gospel, the pastor of the parish should present to the bishop the candidates to be confirmed. The pastor testifies to their readiness for the sacrament. No other testimonies are necessary or appropriate:

Why: The ritual for Confirmation makes it clear that only one person is to present the candidates. The ritual also clearly says that this is to follow regional custom. It has been our regional custom that the local shepherd, the pastor of the parish, present the candidates. (*Rite of Confirmation #21*)

8.6 Normally, the names of the candidates are to be read during the "Calling of the Candidates":

Why: As with other sacraments, the Rite of Confirmation puts emphasis on the Church choosing the candidates and judging them worthy. This can be seen in a similar fashion at the Rite of Ordination and at the Rites of Institution of Readers and Acolytes. The giving of the baptismal name at Baptism is a significant part of that rite. Hearing that baptismal name again publicly helps show the connection between Baptism and Confirmation. It also shows the personal and intimate nature of the sacrament. The Rite of Confirmation, #21, says, "If possible, each candidate is called individually..." It is presumed that the Christian name given to the candidates at Baptism will be used at Confirmation. (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy #71 and Divinae Consortium Naturae*)

8.7 At the time of Confirmation it is the sponsor who gives the name of the candidate to the bishop, not one of the concelebrating priests, deacons or catechists:

Why: The Rite of Confirmation, #26, designates this as the sponsor's role. The ritual says, "The one who presented the candidate places his (her) right hand on the latter's shoulder and gives the candidate's name to the bishop..."

8.8 There is no handshake involved in the exchange of peace following the anointing with Chrism:

Why: The rite does not include a handshake. The confirmandi should be prepared to respond to the bishop with "and also with you" (*Rite of Confirmation, #27*)

8.9 During the Rite of Preparation of the Altar and the gifts, the newly confirmed should be involved in the Presentation of the Gifts:

Why: The Ceremonial of Bishops makes it clear that the involvement of those to be confirmed at different parts of the ritual is desirable. The Preparation Rite is an easy and visible way to involve the newly confirmed. The Ceremonial of Bishops, #470, says, "It is appropriate that during the song of the Presentation of the Gifts some of those confirmed bring up the bread and wine..."

8.10 Holy Communion should be given under both species if this is done at other parish celebrations:

Why: Every effort to connect the sacrament of Confirmation with the Eucharist is to be encouraged. Confirmation naturally directs us to the Lord's table. Participation in the fullest form of Holy Communion will aid in making this connection. The Ceremonial for Bishops, #470, encourages this practice by saying, "the newly confirmed, their sponsors, parents, wives and husbands, catechists and relatives may receive communion under both kinds." (A fuller explanation may be found in the document of the NCCB, "This Holy and Living Sacrifice")

8.11 Confirmation certificates are not to be distributed during or immediately following the Confirmation Liturgy:

Why: The rite does not call for this adaptation. This action signifies a school graduation understanding of Confirmation. Anything that suggests a graduation model to the newly confirmed or to the assembly should be strictly avoided.

8.12 The use of Confirmation robes, while permissible, is not called for by the rite:

Why: When specific or different vesture is called for during a ritual, the ritual directs the Church in a clear fashion. At Baptism, the ritual calls for a baptismal garment, (white garment - Rite of Baptism for Children, #63). At Ordinations, the rituals call for specific attire (e.g., stole and chasuble - The General Instruction of the Roman Missal #302). The Rite of Confirmation calls for no specific vesture for the candidates. While confirmation robes may be incorrectly perceived as akin to graduation gowns, nevertheless, robes are permitted in the Archdiocese of Boston if the Pastor deems this mode of dress appropriate for his parish. It should however be noted that preference ought to be given to a simple white robe for both male and female confirmandi.

8.13 Stoles are not to be worn by the candidates:

Why: There is no indication in liturgical tradition or in the present ritual that stoles are to be worn. Only those ordained are to wear stoles. Stoles are a symbol of a particular order of ministry. The candidates are not part of an order of ministry. The distinction between the ministerial priesthood and the ordained priesthood is blurred when the candidates wear stoles. (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal #302*)

Some Pastoral Suggestions

8.14 Entrance Procession and Introductory Rites:

During the celebration of Confirmation there is to be only one entrance procession. All servers, readers, candidates, sponsors, concelebrants, and the bishop should process in together. The symbol of processing toward the altar of God is an important link between Confirmation and the Eucharist. It is desirable to use the Rite of Blessing and Sprinkling of Holy Water in place of the penitential rite during the Confirmation Liturgy. In this way, the relationship between Baptism and Confirmation is made manifest. However, if Confirmation were celebrated during the season of Lent, the penitential rite would be done as usual.

8.15 Readers:

Readers at Confirmation should be those who are, or will be, engaged in this ministry in the parish. If the candidates serve as readers, they should be thoroughly prepared through catechetical reflection on the readings, and rehearsal of proclamation.

8.16 Adult Candidates:

If parishes have adult Catholics to be confirmed at the same liturgy with adolescents they should be fully integrated into the service. For witness purposes and for the comfort of the adult candidates, the adults should be confirmed before the adolescents. Experience has shown that adult confirmandi often experience their Confirmation as awkward if this does not take place.

8.17 Rehearsal and Proximate Preparation:

Care should be taken that rehearsals deal less with choreography and more with an actual catechesis to the rite and its prayers, symbols, and texts. This is especially true for the responses and acclamations. Spiritual preparation through prayer and reflection based on the scripture readings and the symbols and ritual actions of the rite is of primary importance. Ideally, the sponsors should be rehearsed so that they may guide the candidates through the celebration.

8.18 Photography and Videography:

Photography and videography frequently mar liturgical celebrations. There is a tendency in the culture to destroy the present moment in order to preserve it for the future. The presence of many photographers fosters the misunderstanding that the assembly is present as a collection of spectators, rather than the actual subjects of the Holy Spirit's activity. Pastors should be encouraged to set the boundaries for proper, respectful behavior, and give opportunities for pictures after the Liturgy. The question arises as to how a person is to remember the sacrament without a photographic record of it. The Church's plan is that the newly confirmed will remember their baptismal commitment by weekly participation in the Eucharist on the Lord's Day.