

SACRAMENTAL LIFE

2) *Special pastoral guidance should be given parents of children who do not regularly attend eucharistic celebrations, so as to help them determine the present and future implications of this faith-commitment in the lives of their families.*

3) *Persons who are developmentally disabled, who have severe learning disabilities, or who have other handicaps should be made to feel welcome in the parish programming and have their needs met. Whenever possible, they should participate in regular liturgies and activities, and they should be included in parish sacramental celebrations.*

C. Immediate preparation for full participation in the Eucharist should include:

1) *a deepening awareness of the activity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in our lives*

2) *the gifts of Jesus in his life, death and resurrection*

3) *an understanding of the Church's faith in Christ's continued presence in the Eucharist, as well as in the Christian assembly and his Word.*

4) *familiarity with, and opportunities to participate in, the whole eucharistic rite as the central act of worship and primary sacrament of reconciliation of the Catholic community.*

5) *all the options for the reverent reception of the eucharistic bread and wine permitted by the Church.*

D. The immediate preparation for first Eucharist is distinct, in programming and content, from the catechesis for first Penance.

E. Determination of the readiness of candidates belongs to the parents in consultation with the parish priest and those involved in the preparation process. Parent and/or child interviews with a member of the parish staff are most helpful.

The minimal requirements for the celebration of first Eucharist are present when a child expresses the desire for the Eucharist and is able to distinguish it from ordinary bread. It would be desirable if the child recognized the communal context of the sacrament as well.

II. CELEBRATION OF FIRST EUCHARIST

A. A variety of options for celebration of first Eucharist should be provided by every parish. Family-centered celebrations at a regular parish liturgy emphasize that it is in the family that a young child receives nourishment in the process of initiation. Parish celebrations for children/families of those receiving first Eucharist witness to the communal aspects of sacramental life.

B. The atmosphere created through the choice of readings, music, symbols and seating must be directed toward full participation in the sacramental life being celebrated. The "Directory for Masses with Children" should be used as a guide.

C. Because of the paschal character of the sacraments of initiation, first Eucharist will ordinarily not be celebrated during Lent.

III. CONTINUING FORMATION

The parish should provide continued formation in the eucharistic mystery, and opportunities for children and families to celebrate the Eucharist often together. In regard to the latter, follow-up through personal contact could be most helpful.

Appendix I: Confirmation Preparation

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

A. **Invitation:** to those from the parish who desire to celebrate the sacrament of Confirmation. The central concepts of the invitation are that Confirmation is for all who are baptized, have chosen it freely and are adequately prepared. It will serve to educate the adult community (especially parents) to the nature of initiation before the invitation to celebrate Confirmation is made.

B. **Introductory Meeting:** of potential confirmands to explain the process and expectations of the preparation program.

C. **Interview:** to explore and discern with each person his/her personal readiness for the sacrament and his/her relationship with Jesus Christ. This is a key step in the process. It is meant to be a growthful event, and not a doctrinal examination. It should be conducted by an adult catechist, director of religious education, or a priest/deacon.

D. **Declaration of Candidacy and Enrollment:** to celebrate the candidates' intention to complete initiation into the Church. It should be celebrated by the parish community at the Sunday Eucharist, and the sponsor should accompany the confirmand.

E. **Preparation:** to continue and deepen the candidates' faith formation and active participation in the Church. Conducted by a team of catechists and sponsors, this multi-dimensional catechesis ("catechumenate") would include worship and spiritual development, Bible, doctrine, and service all done within a communal setting of the catechists/sponsors and a small group (for example, 4-8 people). The holistic catechesis envisioned here emphasizes the lived experience of these program elements. (See "Preparation of Candidates" below)

F. **Celebration of Confirmation**

G. **Post-Confirmation Interview:** to discern future involvement in the communal life of the Church. This is not a doctrinal examination, but a prayerful exploration into the possibilities of service, fellowship, study and worship.

H. **Mission and Continuing Growth of Those Confirmed:** opportunities should be provided for service to the com-

munity, membership in small groups, and continual spiritual, biblical and doctrinal formation.

PREPARATION OF CANDIDATES

A. Spiritual Readiness

Assessing the spiritual preparedness of a person for Confirmation is a difficult task. Considering the mobility and pace of modern society; quantitative criteria, such as number of years in a catechetical program, are not of themselves good measures of spiritual readiness. Rather a mutual, prayerful discernment which will take place during the interviews, will probably be the most helpful source.

The catechist, sponsor, director of religious education, or priest/deacon could be the person who assesses spiritual readiness with the candidate. A loving sense of trust must pervade all discussions.

Some clarifying questions might include: is the person willing to participate in the communal worship of God? has this person found the Lord in his/her life? is this person willing to grow in understanding of the sacred mysteries, as found in the Bible and tradition?

B. Catechesis

The proper catechesis for Confirmation is not a basic review of all doctrines. Confirmation is not a graduation, but is initiatory. Catechesis, therefore should be geared toward leading the person into the Christian-communal lifestyle. The principal focus should be the Paschal Mystery, the death and resurrection of Christ as a reality made present in our lives.

The major content areas should include:

1) *the mystery of grace, the reality of sin and the need for salvation*

2) *the nature of the Paschal Mystery*

3) *the Church as the faith community which makes present Jesus' death and resurrection*

4) *the sacraments of initiation as incorporation into the death and resurrection of Christ*

5) *the Christian lifestyle of faith as participation in the death and resurrection of Christ.*

The principal book to be used should be the Bible, since the Word of God is the key source of revelation. Activities should be biblically centered. Textbooks should be seen as supplemental to, and not the focus of, the preparation program.

C. Prayer

An essential element in the life of a Christian is the development of a strong prayer life. Confirmation programs should offer generous opportunities for participation in prayer. Confirmands should experience and be instructed in three forms of prayer:

1) **liturgical prayer:** *the official public prayer of the Church is the summit and source of Christian life (the Liturgy of the Hours, the Eucharist, the other sacraments).*

2) **private prayer:** *(scriptural prayer, meditation, spiritual reading, the rosary, etc.).*

3) **communal devotions:** *good devotions should flow from and lead to the liturgy (stations of the Cross, Bible Vigils, Benediction, communal Holy Hours, etc.).*

D. Spiritual Direction

The essence of the completion of one's initiation is deepening of one's conversion of Christ. While doctrinal catechesis helps this process, there is a need for individual guidance in orienting oneself to Christ's life and values. A spiritual director offers guidance and specific steps in the imitation of Christ. The sponsor should serve actively in this role through regular discussion, faith-sharing, biblical reflection and prayer with the confirmand. Days of recollection and/or retreats can serve to enhance this process.

E. Roles

1) **Parish community:** *often too large to be directly involved in the preparation of candidates, should be reminded that those who are completing their initiation are preparing to join them as full members. Practically, the parish community should welcome confirmands into their small groups, pray for and with them, enter with them into the process of conversion, and as individuals come forward to help in the preparation program.*

2) **Planning team:** *each parish should organize a planning team according to its own resources. This team would coordinate and facilitate the preparation, the liturgy of Confirmation and the follow-up.*

3) **Catechist:** *the catechist nurtures faith development through personal interaction, instruction, creative group sessions, a prayerful environment, a strong sense of trust with the confirmands, and their own preparedness.*

4) **Parents:** *for the confirmands who are living at home, parents can play an important role in the completion of their initiation. In this sacrament, too, they remain the primary and principal educators of their children. However, parents should not pressure their children into receiving this sacrament; a free choice must be present. Parents should be encouraged to share the responsibility for preparing their sons and daughters for the completion of initiation.*

5) **Sponsors:** *(see Rite of Confirmation, I. Preparation, G)*

Appendix II: The Liturgy of Confirmation

A. In planning the liturgy of Confirmation, due consideration should be given to the liturgical season in which the sacrament is celebrated.

1) *on Sundays of Advent, Lent and Easter, and on solemnities, the Mass of the day is to be used. This practice is also encouraged on any Sunday when Confirmation occurs.*

2) *on other days, the ritual Mass of Confirmation*

(Sacramentary, page 834-835) or the votive Mass of the Holy Spirit (Sacramentary, pages 940-942) may be used. Readings are taken from the Lectionary for Confirmation (#763-767).

B. The proper distribution of liturgical ministries (lector, eucharistic ministers, cantor, deacons, etc.) should be maintained throughout the celebration.

The procession of ministers is as follows: thurifer, cross-bearer, Easter candle bearer, lectors, deacon with the book, eucharistic ministers, concelebrants, bishop.

There should be a rehearsal for all liturgical ministers so that the liturgy will flow smoothly.

C. Music is an integral part of the liturgy. The entire congregation, and not just the confirmands, are called to full participation. All should have the necessary texts (readings and presidential prayers are not to be included) in hymnals or a legally reproduced form. The cantor can assist the congregational participation.

The following parts should be sung: responsorial psalm, gospel acclamation, Holy, Holy, Holy, memorial acclamation, Great Amen, communion song. Additional places for music or singing include: entrance song, recessional song, anointing with oil (instrumental music may be better here), Preface, Eucharistic Prayer, Lord's Prayer, Lamb of God. (See "Music in Catholic Worship")

D. Candidates should be seated with their families and sponsors throughout the church. Families sharing the liturgy together is an important value. Confirmands may also sit with sponsors.

E. Communion should be given under both forms. Care should be taken to provide enough communion stations for the reverent and smooth distribution of Communion.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

A. Suitable attire is recommended for the liturgy of Confirmation. Robes which are dignified, made of quality material and appropriate for the age of the confirmands are allowed. The persons to be confirmed should be involved in the decision to wear robes. Confirmands are not to wear stoles or to be given stoles at any point in the program. This vestment is appropriate only to those in Holy Orders (i.e. deacons, priests, and bishop). No one should be forced to rent or purchase specific clothing, including robes, in order to be confirmed.

B. Information necessary for the parish Confirmation register should be obtained prior to the liturgy. Notation is also to be made in the baptismal register or sent to the church of Baptism.

C. It is recommended that a certificate be given to each confirmand. These certificates should be signed by the pastor and include the confirmands baptismal date, as well as the information about the Confirmation. So as not to interrupt the flow of the liturgy, certificates should not be given out at the ceremony. A reception after Confirmation or a follow-up session may be a more appropriate time.

PENANCE

Introduction

A loving and faithful God reaches out to sinful humanity and freely offers the gift of renewed friendship. Because all creation is the object of God's reconciling love, of itself it cannot initiate reconciliation through good works or sacrifices. The death of Jesus on the cross is the means by which, once for all, all creation is reconciled. Our response to the invitation to accept this gift is celebrated in a life of Christ-like service, to continue Christ's work of unity and peace. The Church, the believers in this mystery of love, becomes an agent of reconciliation. This community of God's people is the sign of Christ's continued healing presence in the world. Participation in the life of the Church means a life in union with Christ. (Romans 3:21-26, 5:6-11, II Corinthians 5:18-21, Ephesians 1:7-14, Colossians 1:19-20, Hebrews 9:11-14)

The sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist and Penance are signs of this lived experience of reconciliation within the believing community. The life of the community, as well as the life of each individual within the community, is a process of conversion: a process of continually turning back to God. The good news of God's constant love and invitation is the living reality that is celebrated in Word and sacrament. The revised Rite of Penance emphasizes the deepening of this ongoing conversion, which was initiated at Baptism and which the community continues to celebrate in the Eucharist (Rite of Penance #2,3).

Full participation in the life of a reconciling community enables one to discover a sense of belonging. This sense undergirds the search for maturity in Christ, the process of conversion. This communal context invites the individual to develop a loving relationship with God and with those embracing a common faith. It prompts the individual to express freely his/her acceptance of the reconciliation offered through Jesus and to participate actively in sharing this good news with others (RP #4).

In keeping with the spirit and directives of Vatican Council II and since all sacraments are by their very nature communal, the Rite of Penance should be celebrated within the context of community. Two rites are formulated expressly for this purpose, and even the rite for individual penitents gives expression to the communal aspect of the sacrament. Not only are we forgiven of our sins through God's mercy, but we are also reconciled with the communion of the faithful who have been wounded by our sins and who work for our conversion by charity, example and