

DIOCESE OF NORTHAMPTON

GUIDELINES FOR CONFIRMATION

Background to these Guidelines

In August 2007 a group of educators with an interest in and experience of confirmation were invited to meet with Bishop Peter at the RE Centre. During the discussion Bishop Peter asked if some Guidelines for Confirmation could be drawn up to assist all those working to prepare young people for the Sacrament of Confirmation. These guidelines have been produced in consultation with various practitioners across the Diocese. Extra copies are available from the NORES office or can be downloaded from the NORES website (www.nores.org.uk under the catechesis section).

Context and Definitions

The Rite of Confirmation, Apostolic Constitution and an Introduction to the Rite of Confirmation can be found by following the link:

www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Rites/RiteRitual.html#Confirmation

A summary of Church teaching about Confirmation can be found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 1315- 1321). In addition an inexpensive small booklet containing the Rite of Confirmation and a useful introduction is available from St Paul's Bookshop by quoting the ISBN 9780854390847. These resources provide valuable assistance in considering important questions regarding the Sacrament of Confirmation and give theological context to these guidelines which have a primarily practical focus.

I. Preparation

Good preparation is the foundation to a fruitful confirmation programme. In this section key aspects of preparation will be considered under the headings of: *Process & Practical Details, Resources and Retreat Centres.*

A. Process & Practical details

BE CLEAR OF YOUR AIM

Your plans for confirmation will be shaped by the broad vision for formation you have in your parish (i.e. how you have decided to provide sacramental preparation and other formation, how you train, mentor and support volunteers) as well as the particular aims you have in mind for confirmation preparation. It is important to consider how your confirmation preparation fits into the broader vision for formation in your parish as well as being clear about what you are aiming for with your confirmation programme. For example, do you want a one-off programme leading to confirmation for the young people who present themselves? Or do you want to begin, or further develop, a youth ministry within which the young people are prepared for confirmation and continue to experience belonging to the parish faith community before, during and after confirmation? The chosen aims will have particular implications for resourcing the preparation process.

TEAM MINISTRY

Gather, train and mobilise a team who will run the confirmation programme. As a first step the Parish Priest or the catechist he has delegated to lead, should recruit and meet with a team to organise the programme for that particular year. As well as having a clearly defined role for the overall leader it is also helpful to decide at this point who is going to fulfil particular roles on the team. By having roles clearly defined at the outset you can avoid potential problems and misunderstandings that may arise later on. When assigning roles it can be helpful to think of jobs for people rather than people for jobs, i.e. try to utilise the particular giftedness of the people you have that particular year, this helps keep the process

fresh and makes room for people to be able to use their God given gifts. You may wish to include some team training sessions before the confirmation sessions start, or even insert some during and after the programme too. By supporting the catechists with training and making space for debriefing time after the confirmation sessions this helps the team members feel well supported and equipped for what they are being asked to do. If you can help make the whole process a positive one for your catechists and volunteers this can help enormously with retention and recruitment in the future.

PROCESS OF FORMATION

Since post-baptismal catechesis should draw inspiration from the baptismal catechumenate (GDC 91) there should be celebrations of rites to mark stages of the process of preparation e.g. enrolment, election, sending forth as well as a service of reconciliation. The resources marked * (in Section B) include sample liturgies for these rites. The celebration of Confirmation during the Eucharist helps underline the unity of the sacraments of Christian initiation (CCC 1321). Now you have clarified your aim, gathered a team and are clear on what sort of formation you want to offer you can decide what resources to use as you plan your preparation sessions. For programmes being run for teenagers it is advisable that some sessions for parents are included as part of the process of formation.

PARISH BASED

The process of preparation is normally Parish based for young people of secondary school age. Where children of a younger age are being confirmed it is important that the Parish based programme is supported by the Catholic primary school.

PLANNING AHEAD, *DECIDING WHEN & WHERE* It's time to get the diaries out! Arrange a date for your Confirmation with the Bishop and begin to plan dates around it. Depending on the number of Candidates you have you may wish to join with other parishes for a joint celebration. Decide on the venue for your preparation sessions and plan them, being sure to decide who is going to be responsible for the various tasks. Some suggest that meeting weekly (apart from school holidays) works well, but decide what best suits you and the young people with whom you are working. As part of your programme it is highly recommended that you include a retreat, ideally one that is residential if possible. Plan and book your retreat well ahead of time to make sure that the venue can accommodate you. Liaise with your Parish Priest about the financial resources you may need to run the whole confirmation process, including the retreat. Consider the question of affordability and whether you might fundraise or subsidise places on the retreat, also consider how you are going to collect finances. Many residential centres offer their own programme which may suit you, or you may want to devise and lead your own. If a residential retreat experience is not possible you may wish to find a venue for a non-residential day or an evening retreat, ideally at a different venue from where you have your usual preparation sessions.

CHILD PROTECTION

As with all ministry, make sure you are up to date with all current Child Protection procedures and that the necessary CRB checks for all catechists and volunteers who will be working with the young people have been carried out. Prepare and plan ahead for potential problems e.g. make sure your catechist team is big enough so that if there are unforeseen absences, due to illness, you still have the proper ratio of adults to young people. Also make sure you have enough catechists/ adult volunteers to supervise the retreat (you may find some volunteers in the parish who are unable to commit to supporting the whole of the confirmation process but who are able to help on a one-off event like a retreat).

MAKING A GOOD START; PUBLICITY

Think carefully about how you will publicise the confirmation programme. As well as using notices in the parish or school newsletter and announcements at Mass, explore other ways of extending an invitation to young people who may be eligible and open to receiving the sacrament. You may want to make this a special role for someone on the team. Moments of sacramental formation provide an opportunity for us as parish communities to reach out to those who, for many varied reasons, may not be regular members of our community. The Catholic Agency to Support Evangelisation (CASE) has many good ideas and resources for creative ways to extend an invitation to connect, or reconnect with our faith communities (www.casesources.org.uk).

MAKING A GOOD START; ORGANISATION AND COMMUNICATION

Invite young people eligible to receive the sacrament and their parents/guardians to an initial meeting to outline the programme and what is involved. You may wish to invite them to enrol then and there or to celebrate this liturgically during Sunday Mass or at another occasion. It is good to get them to think about who will be their sponsor early on, in this way the sponsor is able to accompany the candidate throughout their journey. Collect accurate records for the candidates at the beginning of the process since you may need to contact parents/guardians or candidates and it's good to have them at hand. Make sure you collect the candidates' baptismal certificates (or photocopies). Where certificates of baptism are required from other parishes such notification and requests should be made in good time, and well before the confirmation celebration. Good communication is key to having a fruitful confirmation programme. By keeping good channels of communication open with the candidates and parents/ guardians, your Parish Priest, the team members and everyone who is involved in some way in the process you will avoid many potential problems and misunderstandings.

B. Resources

Resources are listed below, with a short overview of what each offers. In choosing a programme feel free to use all the resources available creatively and in a way that works for you. You can also design your own programme drawing on your own gifts, experience and creativity. Having a list of topics that you would like to cover may be a helpful starting point as you consider which resources you want to use. St Paul's Bookshop has a wide variety of resources that can be purchased via their stores (see www.stpauls.org.uk).

***Welcome the Spirit*, by Sister Mary Bernard Potter SP & Nigel Bavidge*
Geoffrey Chapman, 1993, Reprinted by Continuum, 2003, ISBN 0826472338**

Welcome the Spirit was developed by the Diocese of Leeds RE Centre for use with young people aged 13-16. It provides an introductory session and eight meetings. There are also pages to photocopy for letters to parents, programmes, prayers, enrolment certificates, games & activities and study sheets. The course is shaped by celebrations of enrolment, election and sending forth.

***In the Spirit*, by Stephen Gomez & Jean Kings
St Paul's, 1995, ISBN 0854394915 (Catechists guide),
0854394923 (Candidates book)**

A pre and post-Confirmation programme for Catholic and Anglican teenage Christians. It includes an introductory session and a celebration of commissioning, sixteen preparation sessions, thirteen post-confirmation sessions, a parents' meeting and a celebration of affirmation. It includes much creative, interactive and practical learning material.

Power through His Spirit, by Kathy Hunnybun*

Mathew James, 1998, ISBN 1898366527

Developed in a parish situation this programme offers catechetical background material, and an overview of necessary elements in a confirmation programme. It includes outlines for planning seven faith sharing sessions and contains suggestions for prayer and prayer resources, as well as guidelines for planning special liturgies which mark the various stages in the young people's preparation. Age range not specified, seems generally designed for teenagers.

Survival Guide to Confirmation by Stephen Gomez

St Pauls, 1993, Revised edition, 2001, ISBN 0854394362 (Catechist's Guide)

St Pauls, 1993, ISBN 0854394370 (Candidates Guide)

A contemporary programme for young Catholics preparing for confirmation. Written in an idiom for young people and designed to reach them where they are, but without compromising fundamental Catholic beliefs. Seeks to face the real dilemmas of young people and help them discover Christ. Written for young people between the ages of 12-16. Includes introductory session for parents and candidates, twenty preparation sessions, celebrations of intention, acceptance and Confirmation Mass.

Plugged In-Youth Cafe by Catholic Evangelisation Services

This fast moving, inspiring six session DVD/ Video resource is a flexible course that can be used with teenagers. Although it does not include specific sacramental preparation, material and themes in this resource are very useful with confirmation groups and can also be used for other types of youth gatherings or groups. Each of the six sessions contains a personal witness, young people's questions and thoughts, scripture dramatisation, a 'Grill the Priest' questions and answers feature, songs and challenging messages from Fr Stan Fortuna as well as a variety of music and images. This resource is available through the Catholic Evangelisation Services website, www.faithcafe.org or via their office (Tel: 01727 823803).

Preparing to be Confirmed, by Diana Klein*

McCrimmon, 2002, ISBN 0855976438

This resource, heavily influenced by the dynamics of the RCIA process, includes: an introductory section, three enquiry sessions, a Mass of enrolment, five catechetical sessions, a Mass of commitment, two final preparation sessions, a day of recollection and a service of reconciliation. It may be more suitable for older teenagers. It includes leaflets for services that can be photocopied and a CD Rom of resource material.

Getting Confirmed, by Steve Givens,

Redemptorist Publications, ISBN (Redemptorists) 9780852313213

This attractive and colourful magazine style publication introduces the sacrament in a friendly, challenging and realistic style. It is ideal for candidates from the age of 12. It looks at the nature of confirmation and includes a questions and answers section and a guide to realistic Christian decision making. This is a resource that could complement a confirmation programme and could be given to the candidates to support them in their preparation.

NYMO (The Diocesan Youth Ministry Office)

Whilst not specifically offering confirmation catechesis NYMO provides excellent resourcing in various aspects of youth work which can be used in confirmation preparation. For more details contact the NYMO team *via the website* www.nymo.org or Tel: 01844 27337. *Sample confirmation sessions that have been designed by team members are posted in the 'For Leaders' section of their website.*

C. Retreat Centres

It is really good to offer a retreat experience as part of the confirmation preparation. Ideally this would be a residential experience but a day away, even to the next door parish or another local venue can also work well.

SPEC & The Loft (Diocese of Westminster)

(Primary and Secondary age groups, accommodation for 30+)

SPEC, All Saints Pastoral Centre, Shenley Lane, London Colney,
St Albans, Herts, AL2 1AG Tel: 01727 828888
www.spec-centre.org.uk

St Cassian's Centre, Kintbury (De La Salle Brothers)

(Primary and Secondary age groups, accommodation for 60+)

St. Cassian's Centre, Wallington's Road, Kintbury, Hungerford, RG17 9SR
Tel: 01488 658267, www.kintbury.org

Alton Castle (Archdiocese of Birmingham),

(Years 4-9, accommodation for 60+)

Alton Castle, Castle Hill, Alton, Staffordshire, Tel: 01538 703224, www.altoncastle.co.uk

The Claret Centre (Claretian Missionaries)

(Primary and Secondary age groups, accommodation for 40)

The Claret Centre, The Towers, Buckden, St. Neots, Cambs, PE19 5TA
Tel: 01480 810 344 www.centre.claret.org.uk

Hothorpe Hall,

(Primary and Secondary age groups, accommodation for 50+)

Theddingworth, Leicestershire, LE17 6QX
Tel: 01858 881500 www.hothorpe.co.uk

The Briars (Diocese of Nottingham)

(Primary and Secondary age groups, accommodation for 30+)

The Briars, Briars Lane, Crich Common, Crich, Matlock Nr Derbyshire, DE4 5BW
Tel: 01773 852044 www.thebriars.co.uk

Southwell House, Jesuit Youth Centre,

(13+ age group, accommodation for up to 50)

39 Fitzjohn's Ave, London NW3 5JT,
Tel: 0207 435 8534 www.southwellhouse.com/intro.htm

Chellington Centre, (Self-Catering and fully equipped venue for hire)

(Primary and Secondary age groups, accommodation for 30+)

St Nicholas Church, Felmersham Road, Nr Carlton, Bedford, MK43 7NA
The above is the venue address and not the contact address. For all enquires please
contact: Reach Out Projects, Holywell Lodge, 41 Holywell Hill, St Albans, Herts, AL1 1HE
Tel: 01727 818168 www.chellington.org.uk

Crossways Centre

(Primary and Secondary age groups, accommodation for up to 40)

Crossways, Yardley Hastings URC, Castle Ashby Road, Yardley Hastings,
Northampton, NN7 1EL, Tel: 01604 696307 www.crosswayscentre.org.uk

II. Celebration

A. Guidelines

INVOLVEMENT OF THE CANDIDATES & WHOLE PARISH COMMUNITY

As you approach the celebration of confirmation try to meaningfully involve the candidates, and the parish as a whole as much as possible in the planning and celebration of the liturgy (cf. GDC 91).

WHEN TO CELEBRATE?

Ordinarily celebrations take place during Eastertide, and ideally near the Solemnity of Pentecost, when the whole Church celebrates receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit.

WHERE TO CELEBRATE?

If a parish only has a small group to be confirmed, but would still like to celebrate confirmation every year it is recommended that the parish joins with other parishes, or that parishes come together as a Deanery group. Alternatively, individual parishes may decide to wait several years and confirm a larger group from its own parish.

WHAT IS NEEDED?

All the things normally required for the Mass will be needed and the following items too:

- The Bishop normally brings his own vestments, but vestments will be needed for concelebrants. The colour will normally be red, but on Sundays of Advent, Christmastide, Lent and Eastertide and on Solemnities the sacristan may want to check with the Parish Priest.
- The Bishop presides from the Chair, with a chair/s on either side of him for concelebrating priests/ deacons. A copy of the Confirmation Booklet should be placed on the Bishop's chair before Mass. Sufficient booklets also available for the other ministers on the sanctuary.
- Liturgy booklets need to be produced for the celebration. Please make sure that a copy is sent to the Bishop in good time.
- Roman pontifical or ritual and the vessel of chrism for the anointing (which are brought by the Bishop).
- Preparations for the washing of the ministers' hands after the anointing: a basin with lemon and soap, a jug of water and towel.
- Thurible prepared with three charcoals lit before Mass and two to be added later (optional) and incense boat filled (optional).
- Matches to relight candles if they go out during procession.
- Besides the Altar candles the Consecration candles around the church may be lit, if you have them.
- Flowers should be used in accordance with the liturgical season.
- Confirmation certificates should also be prepared beforehand so that they are ready to be presented at the celebration.

THE ROLE OF SPONSOR

"Candidates for Confirmation, as for Baptism, fittingly seek the spiritual help of a sponsor. To emphasise the unity of the two sacraments, it is appropriate that this be one of the baptismal godparents." (CCC 1310) According to Church Law to take on the responsibility of being a sponsor, a person must: have completed their sixteenth year (unless the Bishop or Parish Priest judges otherwise) and be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received their First Holy Communion and leads a life in harmony with the faith and the role to be undertaken.

From a practical point of view, having one of the baptismal godparents as sponsor can be problematic. New developments in this area focus on the role of sponsor as a mentor, often a parishioner who can build a lasting and supportive faith relationship with the candidate which helps integration with the parish community after confirmation.

During the liturgy the candidates may sit all together or sit with their sponsors and families. For the anointing the candidates with their sponsors approach the Bishop in one or two lines, to ensure a smooth and effective flow down the main aisle. When his/her turn comes, the candidate kneels in front of the Bishop. The sponsor gives the confirmation card to the priest standing beside the Bishop and then puts his/her right hand on the candidate's shoulder. After the anointing the newly confirmed and their sponsor return to their places by the side aisles, rather than down the centre, where others may be waiting to be confirmed. The candidates and sponsors should be well rehearsed in this part of the liturgy so that they have no worries whatsoever as to what they have to do and can prayerfully concentrate on celebrating the liturgy.

CONFIRMATION NAME

Candidates may either keep their baptismal name, signifying that they are confirming the faith given at baptism or may choose to *add* a name signifying their new and deeper awareness of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. If adding a name, it should be a Christian name and could reflect a saint whom the candidate admires or wishes to imitate. You may want to invite the candidates to research some Diocesan Saints (Mary Immaculate, St Thomas Becket) or other Saints as part of their preparation process. This is something they could do at home between preparation meetings and could help them in deciding upon a confirmation name.

DRESS CODE AND PARTIES

Celebration and dress should be dignified and appropriate. Parties and presents should try in some way to reflect the sacrament celebrated.

B. Useful Texts for celebrations

- An inexpensive small booklet containing the Rite of Confirmation is available from St Paul's Bookshop (www.stpauls.org.uk), ISBN 9780854390847. It includes a list of Scripture passages that can be used in the liturgy.
- The text of the Apostolic Constitution on the Rite of Confirmation and an Introduction to it can be found by following the link:
www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Rites/RiteRitual.html#Confirmation
- Confirmation programmes in the *Resources* section above marked with * include texts for rites and celebrations.
- A more detailed 12 page booklet, produced in 1991, entitled 'Guidelines for the Celebration of the Confirmation Mass by the Bishop' is available on request from the administrator at the NORES office. While some of the information is now outdated (e.g. the Bishop no longer has his own M.C.) there are some useful detailed guidelines for celebrating including advice for concelebrating priests and deacons, readers, musicians, servers, advice about photographs and sample texts.

III. General Information: The Diocese of Northampton

Patrons of the Diocese; Mary Immaculate & St Thomas Becket

Map of the Diocese



Bishop Peter Doyle

Our Bishop, the Right Reverend Peter Doyle, will normally confirm the candidates. Bishop Peter was born on 3rd May 1944 at Wilpshire, near Blackburn in Lancashire. He was ordained priest by Bishop Derek Worlock in St. John's Cathedral, Portsmouth on 8th June 1968 and ordained Bishop of Northampton in the Cathedral of Our Lady Immaculate and St Thomas of Canterbury on 28th June 2005. To relax the Bishop says that he plays golf "badly" with his fellow clergy, and he goes skiing once a year. In earlier days he played rugby for Windsor and Portsmouth as a prop forward. He now enjoys watching rugby.

Further Reading

For a discussion of eligibility and readiness to receive the Sacraments of Initiation:

On the Threshold, The Report of the Bishops' Conference Working Party on Sacramental Initiation, Matthew James, 2000

'How to run a successful parish confirmation programme', Stephen Gomez, *Priests and People*, April 2004

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Abbreviations

CCC Catechism of the Catholic Church
GDC General Directory for Catechesis

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