



Sacramental Catechesis for Confirmation in the Archdiocese of Miami

Introduction	2
Basic Principles for Sacramental Catechesis	3
1 Christological Centrality	3
2 A Journey of Faith	3
3 Growth in Prayer and Spiritual Life	3
4 Ecclesial Communion	4
5 Inspired in the Baptismal Catechumenate	5
6 Family as Sacrament in the World	5
Principles for Designing Sacramental Catechetical Sessions	6
Policy: Sacramental Catechesis for Confirmation at Catholic High Schools	10
Approved Textbooks	12

The presence of the Spirit in the life of the Catholic Christian is intrinsically involved in the Baptism that precedes it. We are washed, purified and welcomed into the family of Christ and sealed with His promise to be with us always in the laying on of hands and the anointing with the Holy Chrism.



Introduction

Every baptized person not yet confirmed can and should receive the sacrament of Confirmation. Since Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist form a unity, it follows that "the faithful are obliged to receive this sacrament at the appropriate time" for without Confirmation and Eucharist, Baptism is certainly valid and efficacious, but Christian initiation remains incomplete" (CCC, 1306–1308).

Preparation for Confirmation should aim at leading the Christian toward a more intimate union with Christ and a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit in order to continue their way of conversion that began at baptism. To this end catechesis for Confirmation should strive to lead people to take hold of this unique opportunity to inform, form and transform their lives.

As we invite young people to prepare to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, we must encourage them to develop their relationship with Jesus Christ so that they can move from a place of inherited faith to a place of established, personal faith. However, it is important to remember that Sacramental catechesis must not be confused with systematic religious education or the eagerness to teach candidates everything the Church had ever taught. Sacramental catechesis leads candidates to the unique journey of conversion.

So as we invite young people to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, we must empower them to transform the world by living as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today" (Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry, Goal 1). These pages are primarily intended for catechetical leaders and those who prepare candidates to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation in the Archdiocese of Miami. We hope it may help prepare pastoral ministers to journey with candidates and their parents as they rediscover their baptismal call through the sacrament of confirmation.

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Basic Principles for Sacramental Catechesis

The process of sacramental catechesis must be so powerful and vibrant that inspires and moves candidates to respond to Christ with such an eagerness that permeates the rest of the community of faith. Sacramental preparation programs must encounter candidates in their context, feed and nourish them who in turn will desire to fully participate in the “mystery of Christ” in His Church (cf. CCC 1075).

There are several basic principles that provide the foundational understanding of, and catechesis for, sacraments. These principles are:

1 Christological Centrality

The sacraments are efficacious signs of grace instituted by Christ (cf. CCC1114). These free undeserved gifts, that our loving God gives us, allow us to respond to our baptismal call. We must never forget the operating reality of grace in people’s faith journeys. As Paul tells us, it is the Holy Spirit that unites us with Christ and empowers us, through grace, to live as disciples in the glory of Jesus. (cf. Eph 1:13-14)

Sacramental catechesis is essentially an authentic journey of conversion for it promotes a constant encounter with Christ through liturgical prayer and in the context of the larger faith community. Therefore, the journey of formation should stress the essence of the Church as the Body of Christ. Moreover, Jesus holds all primacy and centrality, and We, the body, are one community of faith, the “universal sacrament of salvation.” (Lumen Gentium, 48)

2 A Journey of Faith

A serious Sacramental catechesis must be prepared for what will happen when candidate’s lives are touched by an accompanied experience of continuous conversion. The General Directory for Catechesis challenges all the baptized to embrace a new vision based on the baptismal catechumenate (GDC 176). The move went from trying to “get them” to receive the sacrament into seizing this opportunity as a sacred space for a genuine encounter is key. Sacramental catechesis is a spiritual journey that leads candidates to more deeply seek Christ and continue their way of conversion that began at baptism. It nourishes, strengthens, and expresses faith (cf. CCC 1123). “Authentic catechesis is always an orderly and systematic initiation into the revelation that God has given of himself to humanity in Christ Jesus, a revelation stored in the depths of the Church’s memory and in sacred Scripture, and constantly communicated from one generation to the next by a living active traditio.” (Pope John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, On Catechesis in Our Time, #22)

3 Growth in Prayer and Spiritual Life

The celebration of a sacrament does not mark the completion of a candidate’s conversion of heart or growth in understanding and living the meaning of a particular sacrament. There is a continuing responsibility on the part of the parents and the entire Christian community to assist them in deepening their knowledge and living of the sacraments. Therefore, it is essential that the faith

Sacramental Catechesis for Confirmation

community accompany these candidates from the very first moment they are enrolled into our Catholic schools.

Sacramental catechesis understands readiness not just as a fundamental criterion for determining when a candidate could participate in the celebration of a sacrament, but whether the candidate shows authentic desire. Therefore, it must be adapted to their context. Adaptation of catechesis requires that one consider age, spiritual maturity, the totality of the person and not just the exterior elements of a given situation (cf. CCC 24, GDC 170). Those who implement the various phases of sacramental catechesis must strive to integrate these principles in their planning and implementation of sacramental preparation programs and celebrations. The faith, attitude and religious experience of the family are essential aspects of determining readiness (cf. CT 68).

This task for the candidate is a lifelong mystagogy, exploring and growing in the sacramental life of the church. The term “Mystagogy” comes from a Greek word meaning mystery. It is “a time for the community and the candidate together to grow in deepening their grasp of the Paschal Mystery and in making it part of their lives through meditation on the Gospel, sharing in the Eucharist and doing the works of charity” (RCIA 244).

Parishes and Catholic school religious education programs have an important responsibility for providing continuing catechesis for the sacraments, along with appropriate ritual celebrations throughout the curriculum. The entire parish community, through carefully planned and vibrant celebrations, homilies, bulletin notices, faith formation programs, charitable acts, and other ways provides for the continual enrichment and appreciation of the sacraments. Families are to be integrally involved in these endeavors.

4 Ecclesial Communion

The Church, gathered, animated and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, is the sacrament in the world, the visible sign of God’s grace for all (CCC 774-775). The community of faith become part of the Body of Christ, the Church, through Baptism. This ecclesial communion finds its greatest expression within the Eucharistic celebration. It is the Eucharist that unites the person to Christ and to one another, fostering and strengthening with Christ as the living Body of Christ. (cf. Sacramental Catechesis, USCCB 2012, p10) Catholic schools, as small Christian communities empowered by the graces of an active sacramental life, must operate intrinsically connected to the local parish community. Therefore, the proper context for the celebration of the sacraments is the parish community, celebrations of the Church which is the ‘sacrament of unity’” (CCC 1140).

Therefore, Sacramental catechesis “is an essentially ecclesial act” (GDC 78) and “not an action which can be realized in the community on a private basis or by purely personal initiative” (GDC 219.b). Sacramental catechesis leads the candidate to a greater involvement in the larger parish community and the community should be visibly involved in the candidate’s preparation (cf. RCIA 11 and CT 24). This journey of faith nurtures the candidate through diverse gifts and ministries.

5 Inspired in the Baptismal Catechumenate

The baptismal catechumenate is the source of inspiration for all catechesis. In the Baptismal Catechumenate, from the moment of the person entry into the catechumenate, the Church surrounds catechumens “with her affection, her care, as though they are already her children and joined to her: indeed, they belong to the family of Christ” (RCIA 18).

In this context, sacramental catechesis aims to achieve a more integral formation of the person rather than merely to communicate information. It is a “process of formation and a fruitful blend of instruction and formation in the faith” which involves the whole community of faith (NDC 19.D). Because the baptismal catechumenate provides a gradual process for new members to be initiated into the life and practice of the Catholic faith, it should be the cornerstone of the Sacramental Catechesis as they are part of the parish catechetical plan (NDC 61.3). The baptismal Catechumenate constantly reminds the whole Church of the fundamental importance of the role of initiation and the basic factors of which it is constituted: catechesis and the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.

It is from the baptismal catechumenate that we understand Sacramental Catechesis as a gradual process that takes place over a period of time. The pastoral care of candidates is vital for every particular Church.

6 Family as Sacrament in the World

Sacramental Catechesis is essentially family centered. The family, by definition, has an essential role in preparation for the celebration of the sacraments. Families are to raise children “committed to Jesus and the Church, participate as Catholic families in society, share together in the life and mission of their parish and the wider Church” (OHWB 77, citing FC, Part 3, FP, Chapter 4, and GDC 226-227, 255). “The witness of Christian life given by parents in the family comes to children with tenderness and parental respect” (GDC 226). As the children later come for a more methodical catechesis, all of the Church documents strongly emphasize the essential partnership between the Catholic Christian community and the family.

The most recent document on adult faith formation from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*, (1999) stresses greatly the role of adults and families on the formation of their children. “Adult faith formation also benefits children and youth. An adult community whose faith is well formed and lively will more effectively pass that faith on to the next generation. Moreover the witness of adults actively continuing their own formation shows children and youth that growth in faith is lifelong and does not end upon reaching adulthood” (OHWB 40, after CT 43).

Principles for Designing Sacramental Catechetical Sessions

The preparation for the celebration of a sacrament is never a solitary endeavor. The initiation and reconciliation of a member of the Church involves the whole community. A strong symbol of the community can be the development and utilization of a team of people who will design and implement the sacramental preparation programs. Priests, catechists, teachers, parents, directors of religious education, sponsors etc. can plan and facilitate sessions for parents and candidates. These people can operate as panels and as individual presenters of input and as facilitators of small and large group dynamics.

The General Directory for Catechesis calls for the use of the baptismal Catechumenate model as the inspiration for all catechesis (GDC 90, 91). The following principles can be applied to the catechesis of youth and most especially in designing learning sessions for adults:

Driven by Scripture (2 Tim 3:16-17): Sacramental Catechesis uses scripture from the Sunday lectionary cycles as a source of faith dialogue. “The Ministry of the Word – pastoral preaching, catechetics, and all form of Christian instruction... is healthily nourished and thrives in holiness through the Word of Scripture” (CCC 132). **The candidates will learn about:**

1. The Holy Spirit as the Third Person of the Trinity.
2. The Sacrament of Baptism where we first receive the Spirit.
3. The role of the Holy Spirit in our lives and within the Church.
4. The sealing with the Holy Spirit in Confirmation.
5. The gifts and fruits of the Spirit and how we are called to be witnesses and disciples.

Promotes Sacramental Life (John 6:56-57): Catechesis always has referenced to the sacraments. Sacramental life is impoverished and very soon turns to hollow ritualism if it is not based on serious knowledge of the meaning of the sacraments, and catechesis becomes intellectualized if it fails to come alive in the communal sacramental practice (Pope John Paul II, On Catechesis in Our Time, #23). Sacramental Catechesis is in a sense a liturgical catechesis, i.e. break open the rite, rituals, symbols and reflect upon what they mean and why; Sacramental Catechesis uses ritual and prayer as learning and worship tools. **The candidates will:**

1. Understand the symbols used in the Sacrament of Confirmation.
2. Reflect on the meaning of truly becoming the living Body of Christ, an ecclesial communion.

Sacramental Catechesis for Confirmation

3. Be familiar with the use of scripture readings about the Spirit.
4. Appreciate the Liturgy of the Word as a time when God speaks to us.
5. Explore the meaning of ritual action including a renewal of Baptismal promises.
6. Reflect on the experience of the meaning of being anointed with chrism at Confirmation.

Faith Sharing Methods: Use the methodology of storytelling and faith sharing in small groups. Candidates will be encouraged to:

1. Reflect on their lives as witnesses of faith.
2. Explain conversion and what it means to evangelize.
3. Examine the Sermon on the Mount and other scriptural sources for living a life of love.
4. Explain the role of the Holy Spirit in forgiveness and reconciliation.
5. Reflect on the central values of Jesus' message and mission and vision of the Reign of God.
6. Reflect on how to take action to counter the effects of personal and cultural sin.

Associated with Life Experience: Fostering Moral Life (1 John 1:1-4) Sacramental Catechesis contextualizes all catechesis in the rhythm of the liturgical year; reaches out to non-Catholic parents and non-practicing Catholic parents. (The GDC states three catechetical "moments" in evangelization – the time of initiation, the time of continuing to nurture the faithful, and the time to welcome back and nurture those who have not been actively practicing their faith). It is important to be sensitive to the memories and experiences of older Catholics while implementing and promoting the preparation processes for their children. The success of catechesis for Confirmation is dependent upon a partnership between parents and parish. "No one can arrive at the whole truth on the basis solely of some simple private experience. That is, to say without an adequate explanation of the message of Christ who is 'the way and the truth and the life' (John 14:6). Nor is any opposition to be set up between a catechesis taking life as its point of departure and a traditional, doctrinal and systematic catechesis." (Pope John Paul II, *On Catechesis in Our Time*, #22)

1. Knowledge of the Faith (CCC 26 – 1065); Teach the doctrine of the sacraments. The Catechism of the Catholic Church and the ritual texts of the sacraments are good sources.
2. Liturgical Life (CCC 1066 –1690); Encourage parents' and their children's active participation in the sacramental and liturgical life of the Church. Provide good liturgical experiences for them. Validate and challenge their baptismal vocation. Provide opportunities for liturgical

Sacramental Catechesis for Confirmation

reflection on what they and their children do, and why. Break open the rituals and symbols for them so that they are truly “full, conscious, active participants” (SC 10).

3. Moral Formation (CCC 1691 – 2557); Teach how to give and receive forgiveness and reconciliation; the 10 commandments, the new commandment, the Beatitudes, the dignity of the human person, freedom, responsibility, sin, grace, conscience formation, moral decision making, social justice teachings, ethics, and the Gospel of Life. Their children need to live in and witness this lifestyle. “Live a lifestyle reflecting scriptural values of holiness, simplicity, and compassion” (OHWB 93).
4. Prayer (CCC 2558 – 2865); Teach the tradition of prayer and provide opportunities to immerse them in it. Help them with their prayer life and spirituality.
5. Communal Life; Help them to see their family as a domestic church in the larger church; help them to connect into small faith communities.
6. Missionary Spirit (GDC 84-87); (OHWB 88-96); Help them to see that by their baptism, they are called to evangelize and to mission; called to serve and to transform society. (OHWB 88 – 96).

Promotes a Missionary Spirit: (Lk. 4:18) Our faith is profoundly relational. All the baptized are called to serve those in need and work for justice and peace. Sacramental Catechesis calls to transform our hearts. It nurtures in young people a social consciousness and a commitment to a life of justice and service that springs from the encounter with Christ rooted in the Scriptures and in Catholic social teaching, empowering them to work for justice by concrete efforts to address the causes of human suffering (cf. *Renewing the Vision*, pp 37-39). **Candidates will:**

1. Integrate Catholic social principles into daily life
2. Be guided and nurtured by parents and catechists into a vision of lifelong service following the example of Christ
3. Be encouraged to serve as part of the preparation experience as it is a visible sign of lifelong faith
4. Serve in ways meaningful to them, enabling them to use their talents and abilities

Directed to a Life of Prayer: (1 Tim 2:1-4) “When catechesis is permeated by a climate of prayer, the assimilation of the entire Christian life reaches its summit. This climate is especially necessary when the catechumen and those to be catechized are confronted with the more demanding aspects of the Gospel and when they feel weak or when they discover the mysterious action of God in their lives.” (General Directory for Catechesis, #85). Young people are catechized by their participation in the liturgy. Sacramental Catechesis must provide candidates with effective and intentional catechesis for liturgy, worship, and sacraments (*Renewing the Vision*, p47). **Candidates will be given an opportunity to:**

Sacramental Catechesis for Confirmation

1. Pray individually and in community
2. Understand the central importance of prayer in the life of Christians
3. Attend and participate of opportunities for creative prayer with adolescents in peer, family, and intergenerational settings.
4. Discuss the importance of spending time with God
5. Establish daily prayer practices (communal and personal)
6. Be introduced to Lectio Divina as a form of prayer
7. Experience reflection time on the formation they have received

Essentially Ecclesial (Phil 2:1-4): Involve many, if not all, segments of the faith community. “Catechesis runs the risk of becoming barren if no community of faith and Christian life takes the catechumen in at a certain stage of his catechesis. That is why the ecclesial community at all levels has a twofold responsibility with regard to catechesis: it has the responsibility of providing for the training of its members, but it also has the responsibility of welcoming them into an environment where they can live as fully as possible what they have learned.” (Pope John Paul II, On Catechesis in Our Time, #24). Initiation into the life of the Church, **Candidates will explore:**

1. The role of the community in faith development
2. The Church as a community of people who profess faith in the risen Jesus and his message and who, through the power of the Spirit, live in loving service to all people
3. The need within the Church for a process of initiating new members
4. The process of Christian initiation and the integrated nature of the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist

Policy: Sacramental Catechesis for Confirmation at Catholic High Schools



POLICY FOR SACRAMENTAL CATECHESIS FOR CONFIRMATION IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF MIAMI CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOLS

POLICY

In compliance with the Archdiocese of Miami Sacramental Catechesis for Confirmation, the Archdiocese of Miami Catholic High Schools will provide students with the opportunity to prepare and receive Confirmation through an established high school program.

“Jesus answered, “Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.” John 3:5

The presence of the Spirit in the life of the Catholic Christian is intrinsically involved in the Baptism that precedes it. We are washed, purified and welcomed into the family of Christ and sealed with His promise to be with us always in the laying on of hands and the anointing with the Holy Chrism.

The Second Vatican Council emphasized two important dimensions of the Sacrament of Confirmation. First, Confirmation as intimately connected to the Sacraments of Initiation which begins in Baptism and completed with the reception of the Holy Eucharist. Second, the model given to us in the restoration of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (catechumenate) has changed the focus from being passive recipients of the sacramental graces and gifts to an expectation that having been given the gifts of the Spirit, Catholics of all ages are meant to actively use these gifts and witness the life of Christ within them and within the community.

In this context, sacramental catechesis aims to achieve a more integral formation of the person rather than merely to communicate information. It is a “process of formation and a fruitful blend of instruction and formation in the faith” (NDC, 19.D). Because the baptismal catechumenate provides a gradual process for new members to be initiated into the life and practice of the Catholic faith, it should be the cornerstone of the parish catechetical plan (NDC, 61.3).

Archbishop Thomas Wenski has approved the following policy on Sacramental Catechesis for Confirmation at Catholic middle and high schools, effective July 1, 2014. The Office of Catechesis will provide detailed information regarding theological key elements of Sacramental Catechesis, approved textbooks and archdiocesan procedures:

1. *All Catholic High School Campus ministers, as Catechetical leaders, must identify candidates in need of the Sacrament of Confirmation as soon as they are enrolled into the Catholic school community.*
2. *Campus Ministers must advise the candidate’s parish’s DRE of the formation.*
3. *It is the responsibility of the Campus Minister to coordinate a Sacramental formation program according to Archdiocesan guidelines structured and developed by the Office of Catechesis.*
4. *Campus Ministers and the parish Director of Religious Education must coordinate the process of the Ceremony of Reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation following local parish norms.*
5. *Common spiritual events (yearly retreat, parent meetings, seasonal reflection days, etc) should be encouraged between candidates from Catholic schools and the local parish.*
6. *All school candidates are to be incorporated in the local parish confirmation date set. If a Catholic High School has more than 40 Candidates, they must contact the Office of Catechesis to arrange a Ceremony*

¹ Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, P.L. 111-118

Sacramental Catechesis for Confirmation



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of Reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation. These ceremonies must be celebrated at the local parish.

Catholic High schools are powerful environments for faith sharing. There must be an intentional connection between the local campus minister and the parish Religious Education Program Director, the school principal and the pastor. This cooperation guarantees a communal presence of the local faith community at all levels, transforming the parish faith community and being transformed through the lives of the candidates.

Initial: August, 2014

Current: August, 2014

² Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, P.L. 111-118

Approved Textbooks

As of July 2014 the following texts and series have been found to be in conformity with the Catechism of the Catholic Church by the Subcommittee on the Catechism, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Please, refer to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Conformity listing of catechetical texts and series for a most updated list.

Anointed in the Spirit – A Middle School Confirmation Program	Saint Mary's Press	S/P & TM/CM ©2010
Anointed in the Spirit – A High School Confirmation Program	Saint Mary's Press	S/P & TM/CM ©2011
Be Sealed	Pauline Books and Media	S/P&TM ©1998
Call to Celebrate: Confirmation (Older Adolescents)	Harcourt (OSV Curriculum)	S/P&TM/CM ©2008
Call to Celebrate: Confirmation (Younger Adolescents)	Harcourt (OSV Curriculum)	S/P&TM/CM ©2008
Celebrating Our Faith: Confirmation	Harcourt (OSV Curriculum)	S/P&TM ©2000
Christ Our Life: Confirmed in the Spirit	Loyola Press	S/P&TM ©1997
Confirmation	RCL Benziger	S/P&TM/CM ©2007
Confirmation: Gifted with the Spirit (7-8)	Pflaum Publishing Group	S/P&TM/CM ©2010
Confirmation, Inspired by the Spirit	William H. Sadlier, Inc.	S/P&TM/CM ©2012
Confirmation: Receiving the Gift of the Spirit (9-12)	Pflaum Publishing Group	S/P&TM/CM ©2010
Confirmed in a Faithful Community: Candidate's Handbook	Saint Mary's Press	S/P ©2006
Confirmed in a Faithful Community: Candidates Handbook (Immediate Preparation)	Saint Mary's Press	S/P ©2006
Confirmed in the Spirit (7-9)	Loyola Press	S/P&TM ©2007, 2013
Image of God (Mass Books and Confirmation)	Ignatius Press	S/P&TM ©1986-1993
Jesus Brings Us Life	Pauline Books and Media	S/P&TM ©1996
The Sacrament of Confirmation	New Hope Publications	S/P ©2011, 2013
Send Out Your Spirit: A Confirmation: Candidate's Handbook for Faith	Ave Maria Press	S/P&TM ©2003, 2010
The Spirit Sets Us Free: Confirmation Prep for Youth	William H. Sadlier, Inc.	S/P&TM ©2000

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Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium, Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html

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Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us: A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1999, www.usccb.org/education/ourhearts.htm

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions. Revised Edition, 2002.