

Be Sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit:
Liturgical & Musical Guidelines for the Sacrament of Confirmation

Department of Lifelong Faith Formation
Diocese of Buffalo

It is with great joy that the Bishop (or his delegate) joins with your parish to give God thanks and praise by sealing with the gifts of the Holy Spirit those baptized as children and now ready for the sacrament of Confirmation.

Your diligent prayer and work on behalf of your candidates is fulfilled in the celebration of the liturgy. Preparing the candidates to participate fully in the liturgy, and preparing the liturgy so that it may be celebrated with joy and reverence is necessary.

The following guidelines have been developed in consultation with the bishops of this diocese. Please refer to them while planning the liturgy and preparing the candidates. They are to be an aid in preparing meaningful Confirmation liturgies.

Scheduling:

1. If there are 25 or fewer candidates in your parish, join with another/other parish(es) in your vicariate. Share resources and ministries—especially planning the liturgical celebration. A good-sized assembly makes for a more spirited celebration.
2. Participation in the annual Confirmation celebration at St. Joseph Cathedral is also a very good option for smaller groups.
3. Offer several alternative dates for celebrating Confirmation when requesting your date from the Chancery to make it easier to schedule the Confirmation.

Preparing the Candidates

1. Be familiar with the Mass and the Rite of Confirmation so the candidates understand the basic structure of the celebration.
2. Practice aloud with the candidates the response (“I do!”) that they give together when the bishop leads them in renewing their baptismal vows. Practice also, saying together, “Amen!” after the bishop says the text that begins, “This is our faith. . .” Teach and practice the responses that each individual gives (“Amen!” *and* “And also with you.”) to the bishop at the anointing.
3. Encourage candidates to dress *appropriately* for the liturgy. To avoid differing interpretations of the term “appropriate dress” some parish have the candidates wear robes. However, in our tradition, only ordained ministers wear stoles as a sign of office; candidates for confirmation do not.

Preparing the Liturgy

1. Select scripture readings from Sacrament of Confirmation section in the *Lectionary for Mass*. If however, Confirmation is being celebrated on a Sunday of Advent, Lent or

- Easter, or another day with the rank of “solemnity,” use the readings for the Mass of that day.
2. While a photocopy of the readings might be used for practice and preparation, at Mass, the reading is best proclaimed from the lectionary itself.
 3. A single reader proclaims each reading. Readers should not ‘share’ a reading in order to maximize those who are involved. There may be one or two readings in addition to the gospel—all from sacred scripture. (The gospel is proclaimed by the deacon or a priest.)
 4. To choose a reader or readers, look for those who have the charism, or spiritual gift, for this service. This includes good public speaking skills (being comfortable in front of a large group, a clear voice, being able to enunciate, pace one’s self, make eye contact while reading and so on). Equally important, is the ability to take the scripture to heart, according to one’s age and ability, and thus be able to communicate its meaning to the gathered assembly.
 5. Practice with the readers: aloud many times, and at least twice in the church at the ambo/pulpit with the microphone.
 6. Remember the season of the church year when adorning the altar. If Confirmation is being celebrated during Lent, for example, keep decorations modest and to a minimum. During the fifty days of Easter, perhaps you can coordinate with those decorating for the season so that whatever—if anything—is added becomes part of the whole.
 7. The ordained ministers will wear red vestures, but that doesn’t mean that flowers, the altar cloth or any banners or tapestries need be red. That there are seven gifts of the Holy Spirit doesn’t mean that you need seven flower arrangements, seven banners or seven verses to seven songs. Take care that anything used adds to reverent festivity without distracting from the action of the liturgy.
 8. If it is your custom to employ liturgical gesture (other than the standard postures and gestures of the Mass), integrate it into the processions (entrance, gifts, recessional) rather than using it as a stand-alone meditation.
 9. Avoid unnecessary announcements. Think through any *ad libitum* remarks to be made during the liturgy.
 10. It is preferred that the candidates and their sponsors be seated together (in alternating rows) so that they are together when presented to the Bishop and, so that the Bishop can easily speak directly to them. For this reason we discourage having candidates sit with their families.
 11. The candidates are not presented one by one, but as a group. Since they are already gathered before the Bishop in their seats, they need only to stand in their places. The pastor, deacon or catechist addresses them in words like these: “Let those who are to be confirmed stand in their places.” Then the speaker might address the bishop in words like these, “Dear Bishop [Name], on behalf of [Name] parish, I present to you those to be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit this [day/evening].” This BRIEF presentation is done from a suitable place. The homily follows.
 12. Organize the candidates’ movement from their seat to the Bishop as a simple procession, with candidates coming up gracefully and continuously one after another or 2 across.
 13. **Do not have the candidate’s family accompany him or her to the Bishop for the anointing.**

14. A catechist or usher may be stationed up front well off to one or both sides of the main aisle to indicate where the line waits and to make sure that the candidates approach in graceful and timely fashion.
15. Often the bishop sits in the chair—an ancient sign of his office—to confer the sacrament. The candidate kneels and faces the bishop with his or her sponsor directly behind. Other bishops stand to confer the Sacrament.
16. The candidates need not carry anything with them. Although brief, this moment of interaction with the bishop is important, so nothing should distract the candidate (or sponsor) from making eye contact with the Bishop, listening to what he says and responding clearly. For this reason, the candidates need not have lit candles for the renewal of baptismal vows. Sharing the light of Christ and holding a lit candle is a profound sign of our baptism that could easily be used in prior group prayer, perhaps even as prayer at the rehearsal.
17. A few of the newly confirmed may be chosen ahead of time and rehearsed to present the gifts of bread and wine to the Bishop. It's preferable not to adorn the altar at this point, but rather to simply move from the Rite of Confirmation into the liturgy of the Eucharist.
18. The ritual of Confirmation is rich, full and complete. Please do not add additional items to the procession with the gifts of bread and wine. Such items tend not be visible, need additional explanation and are less apt signs of offering our lives than are the bread and wine. Also, there is no need for a post-communion meditation or witness talk—a brief moment of communal silence is recommended.
19. Certificates are not required. If given, distribute them at the reception. Do the same with any gifts of appreciation for catechists and volunteers. This will avoid the feeling that the liturgy is dragging on.

Music at the Rite of Confirmation – suggestions provided by Alan Lukas, Diocesan Director of Music:

1. Above all, the assembly should be encouraged to sing, simply, by the music that is chosen. Confirmation is not a time for choirs and ensembles to perform. Keep the assembly's needs and capabilities in mind.
2. Confirmation is a wonderful time to unify your musical groups. Have the choir learn the ensemble's music, and vice versa. Form one unified group of musicians and singers. Try not to have a choir and folk ensemble competing against each other from different areas of the church.
3. It's best if all rehearsals are completed well before people start gathering in the church. Because only *very familiar* music should be chosen, there might not even need to be a rehearsal with the assembly.
4. All who have gathered should sing the entrance hymn. A familiar hymn that has a recurring refrain might work best here. The assembly will no doubt also want to watch the procession, so help them by giving them something familiar and easy. The confirmation candidates, as well as all participating in the entrance procession *should be encouraged to sing* while in procession. Part of our tradition

- in the Roman Rite Liturgy accompanies singing with every procession rather than an instrumental piece.
5. A form of the Penitential Rite, if sung, should be simple, and allow for participation by the assembly. Highlighting the Penitential Rite would be more appropriate during the season of Lent, perhaps less during the Easter season. Think of the liturgical season in which you are celebrating the sacrament.
 6. Because of the close connection between baptism and confirmation, the “Rite of Sprinkling” should always be encouraged on Sundays and Solemnities, especially during the Easter season. (*If chosen, the penitential rite is omitted.*) It is always accompanied by a hymn with appropriate assembly participation. (A Solemnity is a feast that carries the rank of a Sunday celebration.)
 7. The Gloria should be sung, with assembly participation, on Sundays and Solemnities. Because of the festive nature of the confirmation rite, it may be added to the confirmation liturgy but not specifically required. It may be omitted if confirmation is celebrated on a weekday.
 8. The Responsorial Psalm must have a text taken from, or closely paraphrased from, the Book of Psalms. It should not just be a “song” that is in responsorial style. It should always be sung, at least the refrain, and can be led by a cantor or choir with all responding on the refrain. The responsorial psalm should be *preceded* by a period of silence. (For example, “Be Not Afraid” is a “song” in responsorial style, but it is not a “psalm”).
 9. The Gospel Acclamation is always sung. During the season of Lent, an appropriate Lenten acclamation replaces the “alleluia”. The gospel acclamation should be *preceded* by a period of silence.
 10. An appropriate hymn may be sung after the Profession of the Baptismal Vows. It should not be lengthy and should simply reinforce the vows just proclaimed. All should participate in this hymn.
 11. Ideally, the candidates should be singing as they process forward to be confirmed. Music ensembles and choirs can also provide appropriate music at this point in the celebration, keeping in mind that the assembly should be engaged and not neglected.
 12. A choir or ensemble can provide music during the preparation of the gifts, or, all may sing an appropriate hymn. Instrumental music would also be appropriate. Whatever music is chosen should end as the gift preparation is completed. Silence is also appropriate here.
 13. The Eucharistic Acclamations (*Holy, Holy, Mem. Acc., Amen*) must always be sung with all present participating. A choir or ensemble should never sing these acclamations alone. Only the most familiar setting should be used.

14. The Lord's Prayer is usually recited unless the traditional chant version is sung. All must be able to participate.
15. Music, instrumental or choral, is not called for during the Sign of Peace.
16. The Lamb of God is a litany that should cover the whole action of the breaking of the bread. A cantor or choir with all responding appropriately may lead it. Additional strophes may be necessary so that the litany doesn't end too soon.
17. The Communion Song should begin *as the bishop or priest receives communion* and continue throughout the communion procession. When the last person in the procession receives communion, the hymn should begin to wind down. It is not necessary for the assembly to watch the bishop/priest, and communion ministers receive communion, and it's OK to announce a communion hymn while the bishop/priest is receiving communion. A hymn, or several hymns, that have a recurring refrain *very familiar to all* works best here. The communion procession is not a time for choirs and ensembles to perform, nor is it a time simply for instrumental music. The music ministry should take part in the communion procession while singing. If this is not possible, it then works best that the music ministry receive communion last.
18. After communion there should be an appropriate period of silence, after which the entire assembly may sing a hymn of praise or a psalm. There is no liturgical element called a *communion meditation hymn*. And, there is never an appropriate time for those who have just been confirmed to present their "class song". Recorded music should never be used at any time during the liturgy.
19. The closing hymn is actually not part of our Roman Rite, however, it has become in most places, our tradition. If there is a procession to leave the church, it may be accompanied by a hymn sung by all, or, the procession could be accompanied by the choirs and ensembles singing alone, or simply by instrumental music.

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