

Pastoral Guidance for the
Preparation and Celebration of the



SACRAMENT OF
Confirmation

GUIDELINES • PROCEDURES • RESOURCES

Thank the Lord for the
grace of our confirmation,
that filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit,
we may always mirror Christ's presence
in our relations with others,
our *openness* to those in need
and our living witness to the
Gospel message of *joy and peace.*

– Pope Francis. Vatican City,
General Audience, January 29, 2014

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All documents are available as separate entities on the [diocesan website](#). Please check regularly for updates.

Introduction

A Message from Bishop Bill Wright

The Sacrament of Confirmation is, as is commonly said, one of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation. There are two words there that require our attention: initiation and sacrament.

As a rite of *Initiation*, Confirmation is necessarily received after Baptism and, at least logically, prior to our first reception of Holy Communion, which is the summit and completion of our initiation into sharing fully in the life of the church. Confirmation is, then, a marker of a child's developing relationship to their community, a furthering of their 'belonging' as they come to be able to share more fully in the worship, service and mission of their church. It is right, then, that the day of Confirmation in the parish is a celebration by and in the community of the deepened belonging of the children being confirmed.

Confirmation is also a *Sacrament*. At its very simplest, this Catholic expression means 'God is doing something here'. In Confirmation, of course, God is sending his Holy Spirit into the lives and beings of the children who are confirmed. So there is more going on than a 'rite of passage' that the community might devise to celebrate its children growing up. At the heart of the rite is the moment of God's action, where the community is simply present, albeit praying, while God does what only God can do, bestow the Holy Spirit.

This set of *Guidelines* to the preparation of Confirmation liturgies is full of details and helpful pointers. It seems right, though, here at the beginning, to recall what this liturgy is trying to achieve: a balance between a joyful community celebration of a great event in the lives of its children and an awe-filled presence by that same community to the mystery of a great act of God taking place before their eyes. It is the classic demand and challenge of Christianity: to be able to recognise and give full weight to both the human and the divine, whether in Christ, in the church or in the sacraments. So, behind the details in these *Guidelines*, there is the attempt to bring people together for a genuine



community celebration while also leading them into an experience of God present-and-powerful in their midst. We need 'space' for the community and 'space' for God.

I am grateful to the Diocesan Liturgical Council for the preparation of these *Guidelines*, as I am to those who have assisted them by way of consultation or by, knowingly or unknowingly, road-testing some of the ideas and forms presented here. And I thank prospectively all those who will use these guidelines to help them produce wonderful celebrations of this great sacrament.

A handwritten signature in black ink, starting with a cross symbol and followed by the name 'William Wright' in a cursive script.

Most Rev William Wright

Bishop of Maitland-Newcastle

Instruction

on the implementation of canon 879-896 relating to the Preparation and Celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation in the Diocese of Maitland Newcastle.

1/2017

The Need for an Instruction

When one examines the canons on Confirmation, the liturgical texts in the *Order of Confirmation*, the Apostolic Constitution on the Sacrament of Confirmation, the Introduction to the *Order of Confirmation* one is presented with a depth and breadth of options for both the preparation and celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation.

The promulgation of the retranslated *Order of Confirmation* for use from Lent 2016 provided an opportunity for us to refresh our understanding of confirmation and consider how our liturgical celebration embodies this understanding. This opportunity also enabled us to respond to requests from some parishes for confirmation guidelines and resources to assist with the preparation of the liturgy.

The Process in Developing the Instruction

In consultation with Bishop Bill, the Diocesan Liturgy Council (DLC) and Co-ordinator drafted guidelines and resources to assist parish sacramental teams. A series of Confirmation Workshops was run at the beginning of 2016. These explored the retranslated *Order of Confirmation* (including the Constitution and Introduction) and discussed the draft guidelines and resources.

A second series of workshops was held at the end of 2016 and early 2017 to hear people's reflections on their experience of celebrating with the *Order of Confirmation* and their feedback on the diocesan guidelines and resources. In light of feedback from parish communities and Bishop Bill's reflections, the diocesan resources have been updated and the guidelines finalised.

The Instructions for Confirmation

These instructions are available on the diocesan website. They include:

- Diocesan Guidelines for the Preparation and Celebration of Confirmation
- Alternative rites for use in the diocese
- Liturgy advice form and liturgy outlines.
- Master copy templates for confirmation without and within mass.

The guidelines presume parishes are following the Diocesan Policy for Sacraments of Initiation *Go Make Disciples* and that confirmation is therefore celebrated prior to first communion.

Exhortation

Standing on a sound and ever developing understanding of confirmation, the Diocesan Policy for Sacraments of Initiation, and these Confirmation Guidelines, the parish liturgy takes on its own life

as it is infused with the faith of the community, and in turn shapes that faith for the sake of the continuation of the mission of Jesus in its neighbourhoods. I commend these instructions to you,

This Instruction has an effective date of 1 June, 2017 nothing the contrary withstanding, and abrogates all previous instructions.

Given at Hamilton, NSW, on the 26th day of May 2017.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. B. Mascord V.G." in a cursive script.

Rev Brian Mascord VG
Vicar General

Overview

The great commission Christ gave us was to 'go make disciples'. Sacraments of Initiation celebrate the fruit of this work and are great celebrations for the parish community and the families involved. Together we stand on holy ground: members of the community reaffirming their own faith as they witness the commitment of candidates and their families and pledge their support for them. Confirmation is an important step in this process of initiation.

Grounded in our understanding that liturgy is the indispensable source of the true Christian spirit, at these peak moments, the sacramental team works with the parish community to prepare a liturgy that invites all present into authentic worship. A liturgy

- focused on Christ who invites us to join ourselves more deeply to himself;
- that is an action we do together with Christ;
- that signifies what it effects through symbols that are large and effective doorways via which the community encounters Christ and is changed;
- focused on the continuation of Christ's mission in the local area.

More specifically our understanding and appreciation of confirmation emerges from

- The liturgical texts in the *Order of Confirmation*
- the Apostolic Constitution on the Sacrament of Confirmation
- the Introduction to the *Order of Confirmation*.

The Constitution and Introduction are found in the *Order of Confirmation* and on LiturgyHelp and LabOra Worship.

The promulgation of the retranslated *Order of Confirmation* for use from Lent 2016 provided an opportunity for us to refresh our understanding of confirmation and consider how our liturgical celebration embodies this understanding. This opportunity also enabled us to respond to requests from some parishes for confirmation guidelines and resources to assist with the preparation of the liturgy.

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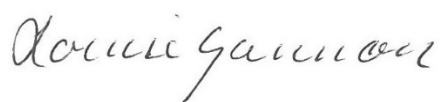
Standing on a sound and ever developing understanding of confirmation, the Diocesan Policy for Sacraments of Initiation, and these Confirmation Guidelines, the parish liturgy takes on its own life

as it is infused with the faith of the community, and in turn shapes that faith for the sake of the continuation of the mission of Jesus in its neighbourhoods.

These guidelines and resources form a living document. Ideally parish sacramental teams will continue to develop their understanding of confirmation by regular exploration of the primary sources, and their liturgical celebrations by engaging in a process of annual review. The DLC will undertake a more formal review every three years. Feedback and suggestions can be sent to me at any time. This will be incorporated into the DLC review process.

Please contact me if you have any questions as you prepare your confirmation liturgy.

Best wishes,



Louise Gannon rsj

DIOCESAN CO-ORDINATOR OF LITURGY ON BEHALF OF THE DIOCESAN LITURGY COUNCIL.

MAY, 2017





Guidelines for the Preparation and Celebration of Confirmation

1. When confirmation is celebrated **within mass, preference is to be given to** the mass of the day – the readings and proper – especially on Sundays.

If there is a significant pastoral concern about the appropriateness of the readings of the day, contact the liturgy office to discuss this, well before it is time to send in your liturgy.

When confirmation is celebrated **outside mass**, prayers and readings would normally be from the *Order of Confirmation*.

2. Parishes **are asked to consider** celebrating confirmation and first communion separately. This is not a 'once and for all' decision. Ideally it would be revisited from year to year.
3. When confirmation is celebrated separately from first communion, parishes **are asked to consider** using the *Order for the Conferral of Confirmation without Mass*. This choice would also be revisited from year to year.
4. First Communion, the final step in the process of Christian Initiation, takes place on Sunday (Vigil included) – the Lord's Day – and in the presence of the worshipping community. It therefore does not normally accompany Confirmation when it is celebrated on a week day.
5. In keeping with the presumption made in the *Order of Confirmation*, candidates **do not** process in at the beginning of the liturgy, especially when confirmation/first communion takes place at the normal parish Sunday Mass.

The parish liturgy takes precedence. The community gathers as usual, including candidates for confirmation/first communion. The latter are already members of the community by virtue of their baptism. The Order assumes the entrance procession takes place as normal. This is a clearer symbol of our understanding of confirmation/first communion as part of the larger process of initiation.

6. To prioritise thorough and thoughtful preparation of the liturgy that includes consideration of the local community, those preparing confirmation **liturgies are to make all the liturgical choices required** e.g. the choice of elements in the Introductory Rite and the Eucharistic Prayer. As always the discretion of the presider in these matters remains.
7. The choice of 'The Asperges' in the Introductory Rite and the use of water from the baptismal font **is recommended**. This highlights the essential unity of the Sacraments of Initiation.

When using water from the baptismal font **the blessing prayer is omitted**. A suggested Introductory Statement is included in both liturgy templates and in Appendix 1 on pg 13. This statement would be used instead of one from the Missal as the latter presumes that a blessing prayer follows.

To strengthen the power of our symbols, when water from the baptismal font is used, the Bishop/presider goes to the font and takes the water from the font rather than the water being brought to him. If additional ministers are involved in the sprinkling, the Bishop/presider draws water from the font and gives it to each minister.

8. Rites variously called 'Witness/commitment of Parents and Sponsors' **are not** to be included in the confirmation/first communion liturgy. Such rites belong at the beginning of the preparation for confirmation/first communion.
9. The 'Renewal of Baptismal Promises' from the *Order of Confirmation* **is to be used. If there is a significant pastoral reason** the simplified form found in Appendix 2 on pg. 15 **may be used. No other simplified versions are to be used.**
10. The *Order of Confirmation* presumes that confirmation confirms the baptismal name. Candidates wishing to adopt a saint's name for confirmation are in fact choosing a patron or mentor for Christian life.
11. Confirmation and first communion are celebrations of the whole community. They are not children's liturgies. Therefore, in keeping with the Introduction to the *Directory of Masses for Children*, the *Children's Lectionary* and the *Eucharistic Prayers for Masses with Children* **are not to be used**. Ideally, preparation for these sacraments would include prayer and reflection with the texts used by the whole community.
12. Candidates for confirmation and first communion **do not** exercise additional liturgical ministries within the liturgy. They participate fully, actively and consciously in the liturgy as members of the assembly and as candidates for confirmation (and first communion).
13. Certificates **are to be presented by Sponsors** in the Concluding Rite or at the community gathering after the liturgy.

14. **Special Greetings** may be included in the confirmation liturgy. These are for members of the community who have already been confirmed or received into the Church, but have not been presented to the Bishop. This may include children or adults confirmed in infancy in Eastern Churches, children confirmed at birth due to illness and anyone received into the Church since the Bishop's last visit.

This Greeting would be offered in the Concluding Rite, after the presentation of certificates. Those to be presented could be accompanied by their sponsor/godparents. A way of doing this is included in the confirmation liturgy templates.

15. Copyright law **is to be adhered to**. Copyright information is available on the diocesan [website](#).
16. Liturgies are to be sent to the Bishop's office via the Co-ordinator of Liturgy **at least three weeks ahead of the scheduled liturgy**. Copies are to be sent electronically, preferably as Word documents.

16.1. The following is to be sent:

- The Bishop's Event Advice Form available from the Bishop's Personal Assistant is to be returned to her.
- An outline of the liturgy in the form most appropriate for the parish community is to be sent to the liturgy office including:
 - The **Confirmation Liturgy Advice Form** (Appendix 3)
 - Either:
 - A master copy of the liturgy (see templates)
 - OR
 - the completed **Liturgy Outline 1 or 2** with additional texts attached e.g. the Universal Prayer. (Appendix 4 and 5)
 - The People's Booklet or PowerPoint.

All copies for the presider's use are to be A4 size not A5 booklet size.

Both the Bishop and Vicar General are pleased to use the ritual books. **A master copy for the presider is needed only if there is a number of changes or additions to the liturgy.**

Beyond considering the needs of the presider, it may be helpful to those preparing the liturgy to prepare a master copy.

- 16.2. Support in preparing the confirmation/first communion liturgy is available from the Liturgy Office. Contact can be made by phone or email well in advance of the time the liturgy is to be sent in.



Common pastoral issues and suggestions

Re Vesture: When celebrating the Mass of the day vestments would be worn in accord with that specified in the ordo. When celebrating according to the *Order for the Conferral of Confirmation within Mass* or the *Order for the Conferral of Confirmation Without Mass* red vestments would be worn. The final decision regarding vestment colour rests with the presider, so clergy would follow the presider's choice.

Discussion at workshops across the diocese noted the following ideas:

- Some parishes make a special effort to include children from the parish schools and candidates' families in the normal parish choir for the confirmation/first communion liturgy.
- Preparation for confirmation/first communion that is based on liturgical prayer and reflection on the experience of that prayer, is a great help in forming candidates and their families to participate fully, consciously and actively in the whole liturgy rather than be there as spectators.
- It is helpful to have families who are regular participants in parish liturgy to sit at the front so others can follow their lead during the liturgy. These same families have more confidence to 'go first' so they model how to do things for those less confident. This removes the need for sacramental team members to be 'hovering' too much and directing movement at key moments.
- The *Rite for the Presentation of Symbols* found in appendix 1 for use in the *Order for the Conferral of Confirmation Without Mass* is able to be adapted by each community. For example: it will need to be choreographed to suit the liturgical space; you may not wish to use a spoken response.

- Catholic liturgy is essentially relational and therefore must engage effectively on a human level. Eye contact and acknowledgement are important. For example:
 - Readers are reading to the assembly
 - Candidates are presented to the Bishop/VG/presider.
- Liturgy is an action of faith and so all liturgical ministries are forms of service done in faith; prayer not performance.
- Liturgical texts are meant to be beautiful; the language is meant to be poetic and to raise our minds and hearts to God. Composing texts such as the Universal Prayer is a gift to be identified and nurtured. Who in the community has this gift? Invite them to assist with the preparation of the confirmation/first communion liturgies.



Appendix 1: Presentation of Symbols

The following ritual is for use in the Introductory Rite in *The Conferral of Confirmation without Mass*.

It is presented here with the same formatting as the master copy templates and so can be copied and pasted straight into your master copy.

The focus of the following outline of the Introductory Rite is the fourth element, the Presentation of Symbols. Preparation for this element begins in the Entrance Procession. That is why the entire Introductory Rite is included here. It is to be adapted by the community to suit its circumstances.

Green text is instruction for those preparing the liturgy and is to be deleted from the completed Master Copy.

Gathering Hymn

The Paschal candle is in position and lit.

As the gathering hymn begins the liturgical procession moves to the sanctuary as follows: cross bearer, person carrying the Oil of Chrism, person carrying the Book of the Gospels with clergy following as usual.

Upon reaching the sanctuary, those carrying symbols move to stand in the designated place. The other ministers make the usual reverence to the altar and move to their position. The bishop gives his mitre and crozier to the servers.

Insert words to hymn here.

Greeting

Bishop: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Bishop: Peace be with you.

All: And with your spirit.

Introduction

The bishop introduces the celebration.

Presentation of Symbols *Please be seated.*

The bishop moves to the centre and those holding the symbols face him.

Bishop: We gather tonight as God's holy people, his disciples who 'put on Christ' at baptism.

The Light of Christ

Reader: The Paschal Candle shines brightly reminding us that at baptism we were enlightened by Christ, promising to keep the flame of faith alive in our hearts.

Christ our light.

All: Help us to walk always as children of the light.

The Cross

The cross bearer presents the cross to the bishop who holds it aloft as the following dialogue takes place.

Reader: At baptism we were claimed for Christ the priest, our parents and godparents marking us with the sign of the cross.

Christ our strength.

All: Help us to love as you love us.

The bishop returns the cross to the person who then places it in its usual position, moves to bow to the altar and returns to his/her place. The ritual continues when this action is complete.

The Word of God

The bearer of the Book of the Gospels presents it to the bishop who holds it aloft as the following dialogue takes place.

Reader: At baptism the priest prayed that our ears would be open to receive the Word of God and our mouth to proclaim it.

Christ our word of life.

All: Help us to listen to your word and pattern our lives on the Gospel.

The bishop returns the Book of the Gospels to the person who then places it on the altar, steps back and bows to the altar and returns to his/her place. The ritual continues when this action is complete.

The Holy Chrism

The bearer of the Holy Chrism presents it to the bishop who holds it aloft as the following dialogue takes place.

Reader: At baptism Christ anointed us with the oil of Chrism, so that, united with all God's people, we would remain forever a member of Christ who was anointed Priest, Prophet and King.

Tonight in the sacrament of confirmation God will again pour out the Holy Spirit upon our candidates so they will become more like Christ.

Christ our saviour.

All: Help us to live as your disciples.

The bishop returns the Chrism to the person who then places it near the paschal candle and baptismal font. He/she moves to bow to the altar and returns to his/her place. The ritual continues when this action is complete.

The Asperges – Rite for Sprinkling with Holy Water *Please stand*

The bishop moves to stand near the baptismal font. A server has the vessels to be filled with holy water.

Bishop: Dear friends, we come together to celebrate the sacrament of confirmation, an important step in the process of Christian Initiation.

May this baptismal water remind us of the promises we made at our baptism. As we use it in this sprinkling rite, let us, through the power of God's Spirit, be healed of our brokenness and renewed in faithfulness and love.

The bishop takes water from the font and moves through the church sprinkling the community with baptismal water. Music or an appropriate refrain accompanies the ritual action.

Insert words to any refrain being used here.

Upon returning the bishop goes to the font, pours the remaining water in and then returns to the chair. When all is ready he continues.

Bishop: May almighty God have mercy on us,
forgive us our sins,
and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen.

Collect

Insert collect here.

'Presentation of Symbols' and Introduction to the Asperges: Local composition © Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle. All rights reserved. Used with permission within the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle.

Appendix 2: Simplified Renewal of Baptismal Promises

It is strongly recommended that the Renewal of Baptismal promises from the *Order of Confirmation* be used. If there is a significant pastoral need the following slightly simplified version may be used.

The bishop continues using these or similar words.

Bishop: Boys and girls, your Christian Initiation began with your baptism. At that time your parents and godparents spoke in your name, promising to bring you up in the love of God and the faith of the Church.

A little earlier you stood when you were presented for confirmation – the next sacrament of initiation. This indicates that you are old enough to renew the promises made at your baptism. These promises remind us of the important elements of our faith that help us pattern our lives on the Gospel.

And so, before this faith community gathered to support you, I ask ...

Bishop: Do you reject Satan and everything that is against God's law of love?

Candidates: I do.

Bishop: Do you believe in God the Father who created everything in the heavens and on earth?

Candidates: I do.

Bishop: Do you believe in Jesus, God's Son, whose mother was Mary?

Candidates: I do.

Bishop: Do you believe that Jesus died and rose from the dead and is with God the Father forever?

Candidates: I do.

Bishop: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit who fills you with the life of God and will be given to you in confirmation today?

Candidates: I do.

Bishop: Do you believe in the holy Catholic Church; in God's forgiveness, and that God will raise up our bodies to live with him forever with the saints?

Candidates: I do.

Bishop: This is our faith.
This is the faith of the Church.
We are proud to profess it in Christ Jesus our Lord.

All: Amen.

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