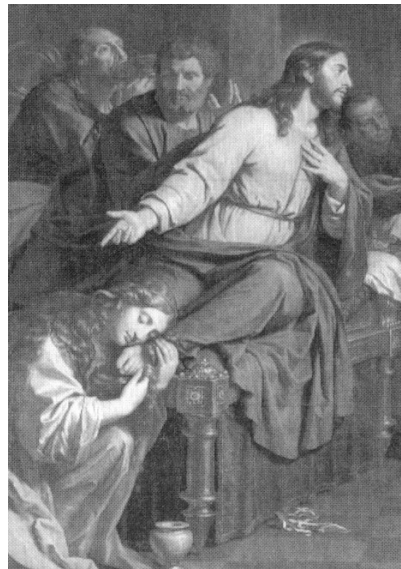
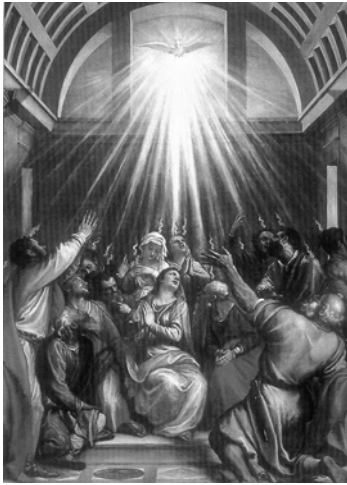


*Formation of Baptized Catholics  
Celebrating Reconciliation and  
Completing Sacraments of Initiation*  
(Sacraments of Reconciliation, Confirmation, and/or First Eucharist)

**Handbook for  
PASTORS AND CATECHISTS**

Pentecost. SOURCE: <http://religion-cults.com/art/pentecost.htm>



The Home of Simon the Pharisee by Phippe de Champaigne,  
1602-1674

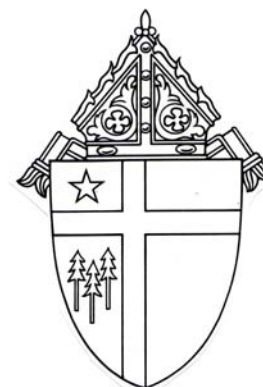


Child Jesus from the image of Our Lady of the Most Blessed  
Sacrament. SOURCE: Missionaries of the Blessed Sacrament

*Formación para Católicos Bautizados  
Celebrando la Reconciliación y  
Completando los Sacramentos de Iniciación*  
(Sacramentos de Reconciliación, Confirmación y lo Primera Eucaristía)  
**maual para  
Pastores y Catequistas**

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Abbreviations

- CT - *Catechesis Tradendae*
- CCC - *Catechism of the Catholic Church*
- CIC - *Code of Canon Law*
- RCIA - *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*
- RC - *Rite of Confession*



Office of the Bishop

December 30, 2005  
Feast of the Holy Family

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

With joy and great hope I present these materials for the completion of the Sacraments of Initiation for those baptized as Catholics. The purpose of the sacraments is to sanctify us, to build up the body of Christ and to give worship to God (#59, Vatican II, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy).

Those baptized as Catholics as infants need the help of all of us: bishop, priests, permanent deacons, religious, lay leaders, and indeed every Catholic to introduce them into the full sacramental life of the Church in accordance with the tradition and with benefit of new methods of catechesis. The frequent celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is an essential part of growth in living the Christian life and leads to the celebration of the Eucharist. Our practice of celebrating Confirmation before First Communion will help to enrich the Sacramental life of our communities and of each household.

Secularism as an ideology tries to enslave both those inside and outside of the Church with a world view that denies the dignity of the human person by abortion and other teachings, and destroys all awareness of the transcendental relationship we have with God. Lifelong Faith formation is essential in responding to such ideological forces. In catechesis, the beauty of the Truth of our Faith, resonates in the heart of the Christian, enriching their living of the Christian life. Each of us has a responsibility to continue to grow in our understanding and love of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The LIFE program, along with other adult formation opportunities, are essential to the continued development of our diocese. For young children, parents and guardians are entrusted with this formation of the children entrusted to their care. Our parishes and missions offer catechetical programs to help the parents in this responsibility. The Diocese of Tyler is maturing as a Local Church and our catechetical efforts have already begun to bear fruit in many parishes. The 15 Goals provides for the importance of systematic catechesis grounded in our encounter with the Blessed Trinity. The Curriculum Guide provides for specific objectives for each goal at developing age appropriate levels.

Proximate formation of baptized Catholics for the completion of the Sacraments of Initiation requires some particular formation, in addition to the ongoing age appropriate formation provided by the catechetical programs of our religious education or Catholic school programs. This formation should involve the entire household of faith. A child celebrating the Sacraments is a great blessing to a family and often brings a deepening of faith to other members of the household. I pray that these materials might help enrich this encounter with Almighty God.

In presenting these materials for formation of Baptized Catholics who wish to complete the Sacraments of Initiation, I pray that they help each parish and mission to better support parents and guardians in their role as primary educators of their children. As Bishop I am particularly responsible for all catechesis in the diocese, and so I entrust to the clergy of the diocese, as well as to the endorsed Catechists, these materials as a foundation for sacramental formation programs throughout the Diocese of Tyler.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

Most Rev. Alvaro Corrada, SJ  
Bishop

Most Reverend Alvaro Corrada, S.J., Bishop of Tyler

1015 ESE Loop 323 ♦ Tyler, Texas 75701 ♦ (903) 534-1077 ♦ Fax (903) 939-1037

## ***Acknowledgment***

It is with grateful appreciation we acknowledge those individuals who have assisted in the dialogue, study, preparation, and presentation of this document.

**Diocesan Christian Initiation Team**

**Diocesan Liturgical Commission**

**Diocese of Tyler Presbyteral Council**

**Diocese of Tyler Diaconal Council**

Special recognition is also given to the **Diocese of Fargo**, especially the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization whose resources, advice, and support have been integral to the development of our materials.

## **Pastoral Perspective on Those Celebrating the Sacraments**

Candidates for the Sacraments are of various ages, some just having reached the age of reason and some maybe adults who did not celebrate the Sacraments as a child. We welcome all ages to the fullness of sacramental initiation. Generally Baptized Catholics are still minors when they celebrate Confirmation and First Eucharist, and so depend in no small measure upon the help of their parent or guardian. The Church offers assistance to candidates & parents, who are the primary educators of their children, and indeed to all the members of the candidate's household whose lives will be touched at this time of grace. Whatever the age of the candidate the important thing is that they have an adequate catechesis and appropriate understanding of the Sacrament for their age and stage of development.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is an important preparation for celebrating Confirmation and First Eucharist. Indeed, the regular celebration of Confession is a tremendous help in living out the Call to Holiness. Preparation for First Reconciliation (or First Penance) requires an age appropriate recognition of sin in the candidate's life and the desire with the help of God's grace to turn from sin. Parents should begin forming their children to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation at the age of reason (about 7 years old) The Sacrament of Reconciliation should be celebrated for about one year before the celebration of Confirmation and First Eucharist.

Baptized Catholics should be formed for the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation and First Eucharist at the same time. These sacraments will be celebrated at the same Mass at which the candidate is accompanied by their household and sponsors. In the case of a minor candidate, the parents will present the candidate for the Sacraments.

## **Resources Available for Formation**

There are three handbooks provided for use in the formation of Baptized Catholics for the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Confirmation, and First Eucharist. There is also a resource entitled: *Guidelines and Resources for Sacramental Catechesis* for formation of candidates for these Sacraments. These tools present the Church's teaching, diocesan policy, and catechetical methodology. In order to use these tools more effectively, each household/ candidate will need a Bible, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and the *Family Resource Manual* for their appropriate age levels from the *Diocesan Curriculum Guide for Ages 4-18*. These handbooks are also available online at [www.dioceseoftyler.org](http://www.dioceseoftyler.org)

**1. "Formation of Baptized Catholics Celebrating Reconciliation and Completing Sacraments of Initiation – Handbook for Pastors and Catechists"** is to assist priests and catechists in the preparation of candidates of all ages for completing sacramental initiation through the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Confirmation, and/or Eucharist.

**2. "Formation of Baptized Catholics Celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation: Handbook for Candidates / Households of Faith"** The purpose of this handbook is to assist in the formation of candidates of all ages for celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

**3. "Formation of Baptized Catholics Completing the Sacraments of Initiation: (Confirmation and First Eucharist) Handbook for Candidates / Households of Faith"** The purpose of this handbook is to assist in the formation of candidates of all ages completing the Sacraments of Initiation.

# **Procedure for Baptized Catholics to Complete Sacramental Initiation**

**(Or to begin Celebrating Sacraments of Reconciliation, Confirmation and/or Eucharist)**

Revised January 3, 2006

Sacramental initiation begins with Baptism and is completed with Confirmation and First Eucharist. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is an important part of preparing for Confirmation and First Eucharist for any baptized person who has the use of reason. With the movement to celebrate Confirmation prior to First Eucharist, the parishes and missions in the Diocese of Tyler will need to adopt some new practices. This procedure is put forth to offer a consistent and orderly manner of helping candidates seeking formation for Confirmation and First Eucharist. Generally a baptized Catholic should begin formation for these Sacraments at the age of reason (7 years old). NB: A similar procedure should be followed for those baptized Catholics that already have celebrated Confirmation or First Eucharist and are seeking to complete their sacramental initiation.

## **I. Petition to begin formation for celebration of the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Confirmation and First Eucharist**

- A. A candidate seeking formation to celebrate Confirmation and First Eucharist begins with a petition submitted to the parish priest to begin formation for Reconciliation, leading to Confirmation and First Eucharist. For a child who begins to have the use of reason, about 7 years of age, the parents or guardian should submit the petition.
- B. A copy of the Baptismal record of the candidate should be included with the petition. This both emphasizes that Baptism is the foundation sacrament, and it is necessary so that when Confirmation and First Eucharist are celebrated the appropriate notice can be readily sent to the church of Baptism
- C. All those in the household who desire sacraments should be helped to work together in readying themselves for celebration of the Sacraments together.
- D. The parish priest in accepting the petition should list the child's name so they might be included in prayer by the parish community.
- E. The names should be listed in a book along with the names of those parents preparing for baptism of an infant and those in the Christian Initiation process.

## **II. Initial Formation**

- A. The candidate takes an active role in their formation. For minors, this is properly facilitated by parents as the primary educators of their children. The parish community should offer help to candidates, parents, and the household of faith
- B. The candidate should have at least an initial catechesis on the 15 Goals
- C. The candidate should have an understanding why they need Confession as part of living the Christian life. The level of understanding has to be age appropriate.
- D. The Curriculum Guide for the Diocese of Tyler provides some objectives based on the 15 Goals for each age group. This can be helpful in determining appropriate understanding of the Goals as a basic formation in the faith
- E. Parish sessions to help parents form their children for the Sacraments should not be part of the regular faith formation program in the parish/mission/school. It should be intergenerational. Indeed these sessions should be open to the whole community.
- F. Each parish should be aware of individuals with special needs. With some adaptation and individual attention many people with special needs can be presented as candidates for the Sacraments.

## **III. Presentation for First Reconciliation**

- A. Candidates for First Reconciliation should be helped to identify sin in their lives. Parents should be helped to identify when their child is ready to celebrate First Reconciliation. This could be aided by written guidelines.
- B. There should be an opportunity for an objective evaluation of their preparedness; this might be done by either individual discussion or by a group discussion with several children seeking to approach the Sacraments.
- C. Once ready, candidates are free to choose to whom and when they will celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation. Parents can choose to bring the child with them at one of the regular Confession times, or to a parish Reconciliation Service, or to make an appointment for a special time. Ideally, the parents and others in the household of faith will celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation with the child. This helps to affirm that the Sacrament is a part of the Christian life.

#### **IV. Ongoing celebration of Reconciliation**

After First Reconciliation a person should celebrate the Sacrament monthly in preparation for Confirmation and First Eucharist. Again, it would be hoped that others in the household of faith would be joining them in frequenting this Sacrament.

#### **V. Formation for Confirmation and First Eucharist**

- A. Formation for the Sacrament of Confirmation and First Eucharist should begin shortly after First Reconciliation.
- B. This should include a systematic presentation of the 15 Goals, in accord with the Curriculum Guide.
- C. There should also be a particular focus on the Sacraments of Initiation
- D. Each candidate should be helped to live a good life as a child of God in response to the Call to Holiness given them at Baptism.
- E. The curriculum guide for the Diocese presents for various age levels the appropriate understanding of these 15 goals.
- F. Parish sessions to help parents form their children for the Sacraments should not be part of the regular faith formation program in the parish/mission/school. It should be intergenerational. Indeed these sessions should be open to the whole community. They may deal with everyone together or include time for breaking them out according to age or interest.

#### **VI. Establishing readiness**

- A. It is presumed that individuals seeking to celebrate sacraments have regularly attended a diocesan sponsored faith formation program which includes a suitable catechesis, age appropriate, on the 15 Goals. If this is not the case then an evaluation should be done to determine if this has been accomplished in the initial formation as previously stated. These objectives for the goals are located in the Curriculum Guide Section 3 pages 5-8 / 9 of the Family Resource Manual.
- B. Each candidate should submit a written reflection sheet when they are ready to be considered for celebration of the Sacraments.
- C. There should be either individual or preferably group assessment of the readiness for celebration of the Sacraments of Confirmation and First Eucharist.

1. An assessment for Reconciliation should be included for those who have not been in regular faith formation programs sponsored by the diocese. It is optional for those who have been in regular faith formation programs.
2. This assessment should not resemble an examination, but provide a chance for the pastor or some designated leadership of the community to hear from the candidate their desire and readiness for celebrating the sacrament.
3. It could take the form of the priest, master catechists, or other trained persons from the community asking the candidates why the sacraments are important and how they will help them live a better life as part of the church family

## **VII. Registration for a particular date for celebrating the sacrament**

- A. The parish will announce scheduled date(s) for the Bishop to visit and celebrate Confirmation and First Eucharist. (Each parish will schedule dates for Confirmation with the Bishop's Office as has been the practice.)
- B. Households with people that will be ready for the celebration of the sacrament should in a timely fashion register for the date they desire to celebrate the sacrament. (Some parishes/missions may have more than one date each year when Confirmation and First Eucharist will be celebrated in their community.) The bishop has indicated that he can confirm about 80 – 100 candidates at a single ceremony.

## Petition for a Baptized Catholic to enter into Formation For completing the Sacraments of Initiation

Recognizing that as a Baptized Catholic I am called to holiness and to full, conscious and active participation in the Eucharist. For this I need formation to celebrate First Reconciliation, Confirmation, and/or First Eucharist. I ask to be received into the period of formation for the Sacraments and for the parish to include me in prayer of those in formation. I promise to

- ❖  to pray each day
- ❖  with the help of God's grace, to be a good person, like Jesus Christ.
- ❖  to encourage my family and friends to continue to grow in holiness and to join me as I prepare to celebrate the sacraments.
- ❖  to participate in sessions to help me better understand the Sacraments and my faith through study of the 15 Goals
- ❖  to ask for help when I need

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(Candidate's signature)

**IF the Candidate is a MINOR:** Recognizing that my involvement as a parent/guardian is of special importance in helping to prepare my child to complete the Sacraments of Initiation, I promise...

- ❖  to see that my child attends Mass on Sundays and holy days and to encourage our household to attend as well.
- ❖  to witness to the importance of Reconciliation, by regularly receiving the sacrament myself.
- ❖  to see to the ongoing formation of my child.
- ❖  to continue my personal faith formation through study, prayer, and the celebration of the Sacraments
- ❖  to support and encourage our household to participate in this time of grace by encouraging each member to respond to their own Call to Holiness and to participate in celebration of the Sacraments.
- ❖  to help my child learn the basic prayers and responses for Mass and for the celebration of the sacrament
- ❖  to daily prayer for and with my child
- ❖  to continue sharing the gift of myself and the gift of faith with my child, with our family and with the parish community even after my child celebrates Confirmation and First Eucharist.

Parents or Guardians:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Accepted by the Church community: \_\_\_\_\_ date: \_\_\_\_\_

Nov. 12, 2005

## Candidate Information Sheet

(Please print)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parish/Mission: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

email: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ If a minor, parent/guardians name(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Parents email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Is it ok to email the minor candidate directly?

Candidate's Baptism:

Date of Baptism:

Place of Baptism: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

God Parents: \_\_\_\_\_

Has the Candidate celebrated the Sacrament of Reconciliation? \_\_\_\_\_

Has the Candidate celebrated First Eucharist? \_\_\_\_\_ When? \_\_\_\_\_

Where: \_\_\_\_\_

Has the Candidate celebrated Confirmation: \_\_\_\_\_ When? \_\_\_\_\_

Where: \_\_\_\_\_

Are there any other members of the household of faith that need formation for a Sacrament? \_\_\_\_\_

If so, please list names:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Seeking formation for which Sacraments?

Reconciliation

Confirmation

First Eucharist

## **Persons Involved in Formation for the Sacrament for Confirmation / First Eucharist**

### **The Role of All Baptized Catholics**

All baptized Catholics are responsible for the evangelization and catechetical formation of the entire world. The world needs the baptized to be witnesses of Jesus Christ both in word and deed, so that all peoples may be put “not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy with Jesus Christ” (CT 5, cf. CCC 900, RCIA, General Introduction 9). The life of each one of the faithful needs to be transformed so that they learn “more and more within the Church to think like Him [Jesus], to judge like Him, to act in conformity with His commandments, and to hope as He invites us to” (CT 20). This transformation into living images of Jesus Christ will enable the faithful to be true witnesses. In regard to minor children (those who are not yet eighteen), preparing for the Sacrament of Reconciliation the adult faithful should themselves regularly, that is every two to three weeks or at least monthly, receive the sacrament. In regard to minor children (those who are not yet eighteen), preparing for the Sacraments of Confirmation and First Eucharist the adult faithful should themselves be living a sacramental life that is weekly Sunday Mass, regular reconciliation, a life of prayer and charity.

### **The Role of the Candidate**

The candidate needs an age appropriate formation and response to the Call to Holiness. This requires an age appropriate understanding of the Sacrament and an appropriate general catechesis. The Curriculum Guide of the Diocese of Tyler provides some criteria for what an age appropriate understanding of the 15 Catechetical Goals entails. The candidate should be helped in this by their family, and by the parish community.

### **The Role of Parents and Siblings and other members of the household of faith**

The initiation of children into the sacramental life of the Church is primarily the responsibility and concern of parents (CIC 890, RC 3). Although the child has reached the age of reason at the time of preparation for Confirmation and First Eucharist, they have not yet been fully initiated. They lack the strength to be an official witness and disciple of Jesus Christ from Confirmation and the nourishment of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. Parents must assist their child in the life of holiness.

Parents are the first teachers of their children in the ways of faith. In Baptism, parents accept the responsibility of training their children in the practice of the Faith and to make it “their constant care.” As stated in the Rite of Baptism (n. 120), parents are to see that “the divine life which God gives them [their children] is kept safe from the poison of sin, to grow always stronger in their hearts.”

Brothers and sisters of the child share in this responsibility of handing on the Faith. Siblings, especially those who have been fully initiated, assist the parents by their example. This family catechesis precedes, accompanies and enriches all other catechesis (CT 68).

The entire family is to deliver the Gospel to each other daily in word and deed, filled with love and

respect: "For this reason the family home is rightly called the domestic church, a community of grace and prayer, a school of human virtues and of Christian charity" (CCC 1666). The family is nothing less than a sign and image of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Trinity, for our unbelieving world (CCC 2205). Active participation in the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist, regular Reconciliation, daily family prayer and Scripture reading enable families to live the Gospel life of Jesus Christ.

### **The Role of the Godparent/Sponsor**

Every child preparing for Confirmation and First Eucharist needs a sponsor. It is desirable that godparents take on this role to express the increase and deepening of Baptism. In the Baptism of infants, godparents represent both the expanded spiritual family of the one to be baptized and the role of the Church as mother. As occasion offers, godparents help the parents so that children will come to profess the Faith and live up to it (cf. RCIA, General Introduction 8).

### **The Role of the Parish Priest**

Parish priests are to see that the sponsors are spiritually fit and meet the following qualifications (RC 5-6; cf. CIC 874, 892-893, CCC 1311, RCIA, General Introduction 10.2):

- must be sixteen years old
- may not be the natural or adoptive parents of the confirmand
- must be fully initiated into the Catholic Faith (Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist)
- must be leading a life in harmony with the Faith
- must be free of any canonical impediment

"Pastors of souls and other members of the Christian faithful, according to their respective ecclesiastical function, have the duty to take care that those who seek the sacraments are prepared to receive them by proper evangelization and catechetical instruction, attentive to the norms issued by competent authority" (CIC 843 § 2).

Priests are to "devote their best efforts" to catechesis (CT 64). They have the duty of preparing the parents, sponsors and children through catechetical, liturgical and pastoral means. The pastor must be both an evangelizer and catechist, acting in accord with diocesan policy and working with the Office of Faith Formation.

### **The Role of Catechists**

Catechists, under the guidance of the pastor, are delegated by the bishop to do the work of evangelization and catechesis. Every catechist needs diocesan endorsement status. They are co-workers of the Gospel. With regards to preparation of individuals for Confirmation and / First Eucharist, catechists may formally prepare children including preparation of parents, teaching of the curriculum, providing a retreat, conducting the interviews, and / or organizing the liturgy. In short, catechists are the ones who assist the parents, sponsors, priests and entire parish in carrying out their previously specified roles.

## The Role of the Parish

At present, the parish is the pre-eminent place for catechesis (CT 67). Family catechesis should be extended within this broader Christian home, the community of the faithful. Before, during and after the children's preparation for the Sacraments of Confirmation and First Eucharist every parishioner should work to create:

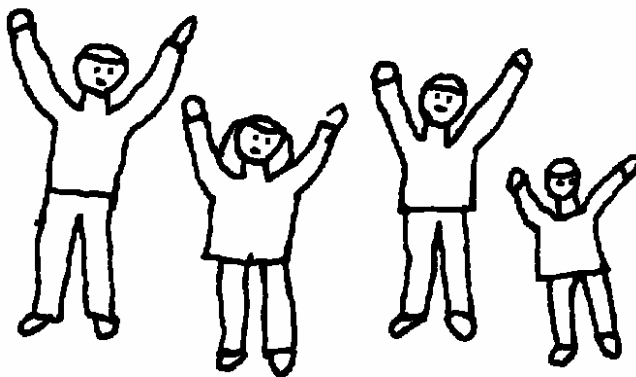
- a community leading a sacramental life and growing in a life of prayer
- a community demonstrating the role of disciple and witness to Christ in every situation
- a community willing to sustain one another in moments of hesitancy and anxiety
- a community that is welcoming, where the Gospel is lived with joy

The parish must establish a complete evangelization process and catechetical formation program. These should include:

- providing for the sacramental lives of the faithful
- supporting parents as the first evangelizers and catechists of their children
- training others to be evangelizers and catechists for the parish
- providing supplies, equipment and facilities for catechesis
- enabling the entire community to live out their roles

In addition, with regard to the preparation of minor children for reception of the Sacraments of Confirmation and First Eucharist, the parish should:

- provide the diocesan curriculum to parents and catechists
- provide information / training sessions for parents
- may conduct a retreat for parents and their children
- assure an interview for each child to assess their readiness and intention
- provide an opportunity for children to receive Reconciliation as close to their reception of Confirmation and First Eucharist as possible



## Regular Reconciliation

Through Reconciliation, Jesus acts as the “physician of our souls” (CCC 1421). Hence, Reconciliation is called a sacrament of healing which helps heal the tendency to sin which remains after baptism as a remedy for concupiscence. The sooner those wounded by sin or imperfections come to Jesus the easier the healing process will be. In a sense, regular confession is like preventative medical care. Fortunately, when First Reconciliation is celebrated at age 7, there is an opportunity to assist the children in developing a habit of regular reception of the sacrament even before they receive the sacraments of Confirmation and First Eucharist at about age 8. Regular confession is the reception of the sacrament once a month .

The Code of Canon Law or CIC, can. 989, states, “All the faithful who have reached the age of discretion are bound faithfully to confess their grave sins at least once a year.” In CIC, can. 988 §1, further clarifies, “The faithful are bound to confess, in kind and in number, all grave sins committed after baptism, of which after careful examination of conscience they are aware, which have not yet been directly pardoned by the keys of the Church, and which have not been confessed in an individual confession.” In other words this obligation to confess grave sins at least once a year includes all grave sins that have not been previously confessed by the person. Yearly confession is the second precept of the Church and thus is one of the ways the faithful are guaranteed to be doing “the very necessary minimum...in the growth in love of God and neighbor.” (CCC 2041)

The CIC, can. 988 §2, states that “The faithful are recommended to confess also venial sins.” In other words, the faithful are encouraged to receive the sacrament more than once a year, to receive the sacrament regularly. Regular reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation goes beyond the “very necessary minimum” attitude to embracing the attitude of “doing the most possible” to grow in holiness, that is to grow in intimacy with Jesus Christ and His Family, the Church. Regular reconciliation and daily Mass constitute the greatest means for growing in the spiritual life, both of which are readily accessible in our parishes. Pope John Paul II teaches,

Reconciliation is not only an instrument directed to destroy sin – the negative aspect – but also a valuable exercise of virtue which is itself expiation, an irreplaceable school of spirituality, a profoundly positive process of regeneration in the soul of “the perfect man, fully mature with the fullness of Christ”, (Eph 4:13). In this same confession which is rightly instituted, is already in itself a very lofty form of spiritual direction. Precisely for these reasons the scope of utilization of the sacrament of reconciliation cannot be reduced to a mere hypothesis of serious sin...confession made at intervals, to so-called confession “of devotion,” has always accompanied the ascent to holiness in the Church. (Allocution of 30-01-1981, AAS 73 [1981] 204; CLD 9 [1978-1981] 597).

Routinely and habitually stating a litany of memorized sins to the priest in confession every two weeks without a serious examination of conscience falls short of the fullness of the sacrament, thus limits its efficaciousness for the individual. CIC, can. 987, reminds, “In order that the faithful may receive the saving remedy of the sacrament of penance, they must be so disposed that, repudiating the sins they have committed and having the purpose of amending their lives, they turn back to God.” In other words, the person seeking the sacrament must refuse to have anything to do with the particular sin and the intention of changing their lives so to come back to God. In this way, the life of holiness will become deeply rooted with every reception of the sacrament.



## Norms for Reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation

### Universal norms

For an individual to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the following requirements are to be observed:

- must be baptized
- must be Catholic (except as noted in Can. 844 §2, 3 and 4) (children baptized in another church should be in the RCIA process for children)
- must be properly instructed to receive the sacrament
- must have the intention of receiving the sacrament

Can. 987 – In order that Christ's faithful may receive the saving remedy of the sacrament of penance, they must be so disposed that, repudiating the sins they have committed and having the purpose of amending their lives, they turn back to God.

Can. 988 -- §1. Each of Christ's faithful are bound to confess, in kind and in number, all grave sins committed after baptism, of which after careful examination of conscience he or she is aware, which have not yet been directly pardoned by the keys of the Church, and which have not been confessed in an individual confession. §2. It is recommended that Christ's faithful confess also venial sins.

Can. 989 – All the faithful who have reached the age of discretion are bound faithfully to confess their grave sins at least once a year.

Can. 990 – No one is forbidden to confess through an interpreter, provided however that abuse and scandal are avoided, and without prejudice to the provision of can. 983§2 which reads "An interpreter, if there is one, is also obliged to observe this secret, as are all others who in any way whatever have come to a knowledge of sins from a confession."

Can. 991 – All Christ's faithful are free to confess their sins to lawfully approved confessors of their own choice, even to one of another rite.

### Diocesan Norms

The Sacrament of Reconciliation should be celebrated in a proper Confessional. Every parish or mission is to have a dedicated room setup as a Confessional. It is to always have provision for anonymous confession through a grille or screen with a kneeler. Provision should be made so that if the priest is willing, the option of face to face celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation might be readily accommodated. The Confessional is a sacred space and should be well lit and clean. The space should be free of clutter or distractions. There should be a crucifix, Bible, and possibly a plant or candle. Nothing is to be stored in the confessional.

When additional spaces are required for celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, such as when several priests are gathered for confessions during Lent, appropriate spaces should be set up as well. These spaces must provide appropriate privacy and provision for anonymous confession. Particularly for First Reconciliation attention should be paid to the environment of each temporary confessional. They should be set up to minimize distraction and to help the Penitent focus on the sacrament.

## **Norms for Reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation and First Eucharist**

### **Diocesan norms**

The norms for the Sacrament of Confirmation and First Eucharist

The Sacrament of Confirmation is to be conferred on the faithful at about the age of discretion (CIC 891), after the reception of Baptism and before the reception of First Eucharist. This will entail the following sequence for the sacraments:

Formation for and reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This should become part of the candidate's ongoing response to the Call to Holiness. During the time leading up to Confirmation, the candidate should celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation monthly. Immediately preceding the celebration of Confirmation and First Eucharist the candidate should be attentive to make a good confession.

Generally, following First Reconciliation, there will be a year long formation period leading to celebration of Confirmation, followed by First Eucharist at the same Mass. .

### **Universal norms**

For a child of the age of discretion to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation and First Eucharist (seven and above), the following requirements are to be observed in accord with the norms of universal Church law (Acts 1, 14; CIC 889, CCC 1310 and 1319):

- must be baptized and not previously confirmed
- must be Catholic (children baptized in another church and not already received into Full Communion, should be in the RCIA process)
- must be in the state of grace
- must be prepared for and celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- must have the intention of receiving the sacrament
- must be properly instructed
- must be capable of renewing the Baptismal promises
- must be prepared to assume the role of disciple and witness to Christ
- must have a more intense prayer life to prepare to receive the strength and graces of the Holy Spirit



## **Signs of Conversion for Children**

### **What does conversion or growth in faith look like in children?**

#### **IN GENERAL**

*These will not all necessarily appear in one child, any one of them can be a sign.*

- Referring actions to Christ (seeing connections between scripture stories and their life)
- Praying on their own and thinking of seeking God in prayer
- Charity for others (especially for those who are not their friends)
- Selfless acts
- Questions about God
- Expressing doubts
- Spontaneous joy at learning about God
- The desire to know more

#### **AT DIFFERENT AGES**

*The needs/obstacles/abilities at each stage must be addressed/overcome/tapped into.*

*PRIOR TO AGE OF REASON (approx. under age 6 or 7):*

#### **CHARACTERISTICS**

- Willing to believe on parent's or teacher's authority
- Need for security met concretely

#### **SIGNS OF CONVERSION:**

- Referring actions to Christ – they know what Jesus would do in simple terms
- Modeling actions after Scripture, Saints, witnesses
- Selfless acts
- Spontaneous joy at learning about God
- Praying for concrete intentions

***AGE OF REASON – BEGINNING OF ADOLESCENCE/ABSTRACT REASONING  
(approx. ages 7-10)***

**CHARACTERISTICS:**

- Begins to make the transfer from concrete to more abstract principles
- Become more aware of spiritual side of life

**SIGNS OF CONVERSION:**

- Questions begin: Want to know more reasons why, more depth, more "meat"
- Prayer begins to expand beyond themselves
- Sense their need for Christ, their problem with sin
- Referring actions to Christ, e.g. they want to be like Jesus in their own lives and somewhat realize the difficulty of doing so
- Reconciliation, Confirmation and Eucharist can make a big difference – they will very much so anticipate their reception of these and trust that God will work extra in their lives because of these sacraments

***BEGINNING OF ADOLESCENCE/ABSTRACT REASONING (approx. age 10-11)  
to LATE ADOLESCENCE (approx. age 14):***

**CHARACTERISTICS:**

- Changes in body/emotions cause confusion, lack of stability.
- Can live with polar opposites in brain
- Need for security no longer fulfilled by parent/teacher---must come from inside
- Have realized that people can't always be relied upon
- Can change very easily at this age: can experience God deeply one week, big sin the next---seem to have little repentance (they are testing their limits, not thinking– your reaction is crucial)
- NOTE: The catechist must address need for security issue/changes in body-emotions; be prepared for these things, have response ready; acknowledging their capacity to be tempted and fall

**SIGNS OF CONVERSION:**

- Questions (challenges): want you to prove it to them, reason to believe
- Want more depth
- Relying on God as their security:
- Prayer can be more in-depth: more open for/have greater need for spiritual experience

# First Reconciliation Confirmation First Eucharist

## Assessing Readiness

### INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

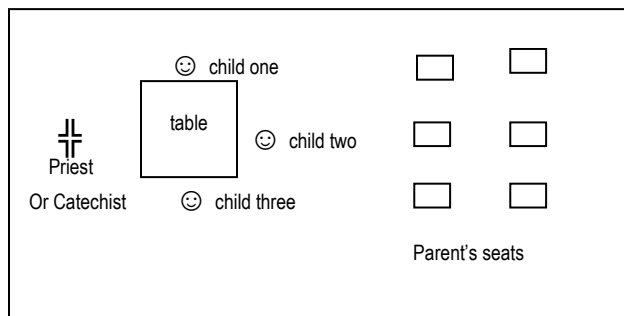
Prior to the celebration of the sacrament, the parish priest or designated catechist should interview each child to assess his or her readiness and intention for receiving the sacrament. The interview should be conducted in such a way that the child feels comfortable. The interview **should not** feel like a test, but rather a time to understand if the child is ready and if not, to determine what needs to be explained more completely.

Either parents or adult caregivers **should** be present if possible during the interview, but should not answer the questions for the child.

Under no circumstance should the priest or designated catechist meet with the child alone behind a closed door. This precaution is to avoid any chance of accusations of misconduct.

### SEVERAL INTERVIEWS

It may be possible to interview more than one child at a time. The priest or designated catechist could have 2 or 3 children along with both of their parents or adult caregivers come together for the interview. This would create a group of 10 people. In this model, it may be helpful to have the parents sit behind the students while the children and the priest sit around a table. This allows the parents to observe their children's answers without having the children be intimidated by 6 other adults in the room. (see diagram)



### **Assessing Readiness - First Reconciliation - Possible Interview Questions**

Following is a list of possible interview questions. Bolded questions are recommended to be asked. If there are few candidates additional questions may be added. You will not be able to ask every candidate every question. Be mindful of the age of the candidate and the level of appropriate comprehension.

**1. Hi, (name of student), how are you doing today? or how was school today? or in larger parishes, the candidate might be asked about their family or their interests. In short, ask a few questions to put the candidate at ease. Remember if the candidate is very young, they may be quite nervous about meeting with you.**

**2. What sacrament have you been preparing to receive?**

**3. Who did we get this sacrament from? When did we get this sacrament? Why did Jesus give us this?**

**4. What does “reconciliation” mean? ...“forgiveness”? ...“mercy”? ....”being sorry”?**

**5. What is sin? What are some examples of sin? Are accidents sins? Are mistakes sins? Why not?**

6. Can we commit sins in our thoughts? words? deeds? things we fail to do? helping others to sin?

7. When we sin does Jesus stop loving us?

8. Why should we ask God to forgive us when we sin?

**9. What is contrition? What is conscience?**

10. Why should be sorry for sinning and try to never do them again?

11. How do you prepare to receive Reconciliation? What do you do when you get inside the confessional? What do you do when you come out of the confessional?

12. What is the priest’s role in Reconciliation? Why do we tell our sins to a priest?

13. Can the priest ever tell another person what you confessed?

**14. What happens in the sacrament of Reconciliation?**

**15. What is penance for?**

16. What is absolution for?

**17. How often should you receive the sacrament? Why?**

18. What are some ways Jesus helps us to avoid sin?

## Assessing Readiness - Confirmation / Eucharist - Possible Interview Questions

Following is a list of possible interview questions. Bolded questions are recommended to be asked. If there are few candidates additional questions may be added. You will not be able to ask every candidate every question. Be mindful of the age of the candidate and the level of appropriate comprehension.

**1. Hi, (name of student), how are you doing today? or how was school today? or in larger parishes, the child might be asked about their family or their interests. In short, ask a few questions to put the child at ease. Remember if the candidates are young they may be quite nervous about meeting with you.**

**2. What sacrament (s) have you been preparing to receive?**

**3. Who did we get these sacraments from? When did we get these sacraments? Why did Jesus give them to us?**

4. How do bishops get this power from Jesus today?

**5. What are some effects of Confirmation?**

**6. What does it mean to be more fully united with Jesus and with the Church? What is the Church? Who belongs to the Church?**

**7. How does Confirmation and Eucharist help us to live as disciples of Jesus?**

8. What is an indelible spiritual mark?

9. How do you prepare to receive Confirmation? How many times do you receive Confirmation?

10. Do you see the Holy Spirit in Confirmation?

11. Why does the Holy Chrism oil smell?

12. What does it mean to be "sealed with the Holy Spirit?"

**13. What sacraments do you celebrate before Confirmation? What happens when you celebrate Baptism? What happens in the sacrament of Reconciliation?**

**14. Why is the Eucharist the most important sacrament (font and summit)?**

15. Did the Holy Spirit ever come upon Jesus?

16. Were Peter and the other apostles filled with the Holy Spirit? What happened to Peter and the apostles after they were filled with the power of the Holy Spirit?

**17. Discuss the patron saint the candidate has chosen. Here are some possible questions: What saint have you asked to be your patron saint? Why did you choose this saint to be your patron saint?**

18. What happens to the bread and wine at Mass? When does this happen?

19. What happens to the consecrated hosts after Mass?

20. What do you do when you see the tabernacle? Why? Do other churches have tabernacles?

21. Why do we call the Eucharist a memorial? . . .sacrifice... meal?...prayer of thanksgiving?

**22. How do you prepare to receive Holy Communion?**

23. What do you do if you haven't fasted for one hour? What do you do if you have a serious sin?

24. What act of reverence do you make before you step forward to receive communion?

25. What do you do after receiving the Eucharist?

**26. Do you receive Jesus in the Eucharist? Do you see Jesus?**

27. What is the priest's role at Mass?

28. How often does Jesus want you to go to Mass?

29. How do you participate in the Mass? (Answer: giving praise to God)

## What Needs to Be Recorded on the Baptismal Certificate?

### WHY AND HOW TO ENSURE THAT A VALID BAPTISM EXISTS

In order for someone to receive First Reconciliation, Confirmation and First Eucharist, they must be validly baptized with the proper matter and form, namely with water and the words, "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

The baptismal certificate provides formal recognition of Baptism. For those children and adults baptized outside of their current parish, you will need a copy of the baptismal certificate from the parish where the Baptism was celebrated. For the sake of receiving the sacraments of First Reconciliation, Confirmation, and First Eucharist, it is not necessary to obtain a recently issued certificate. However, obtaining the baptizing parish's current mailing address is necessary in order to send them notification of the reception of Confirmation. This notification is sent after the candidate has received Confirmation.

For those baptized in another Christian church, even in mainline denominations, you will need to confirm that the proper matter and form have been used in the celebration. Most certificates will indicate the Trinitarian formula right on the paper. In those situations where the formula is not noted, further investigation is required. This may even require contacting the church itself and in some instances even the baptizing pastor. Parishes needing further assistance may also contact the diocesan office.

In circumstances where there is uncertainty about the validity of the Baptism, a conditional Baptism should be celebrated.

### WHAT NEEDS TO BE RECORDED ON THE BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATE?

With regards to the sacraments of initiation, only Confirmation is recorded on the baptismal certificate. The recording of First Eucharist is optional. Due to the sacramental seal of confession, First Reconciliation is NEVER recorded.

In addition, the Code of Canon Law specifies:

**Can. 535 §1** In each parish there are to be parochial registers, that is, of baptisms, of marriages and of deaths, and any other registers prescribed by the Episcopal Conference or by the diocesan Bishop. The parish priest is to ensure that entries are accurately made and that the registers are carefully preserved.

**§2** In the register of baptisms, a note is to be made of confirmation and of matters pertaining to the canonical status of the faithful by reason of marriage, without prejudice to the provision of can. 1133, and by reason of adoption, the reception of sacred order, the making of perpetual profession in a religious institute, or a change of rite. These annotations are always to be reproduced on a baptismal certificate.

Other CIC references include canons 877-878, 895, 1050-1054, 1121, 1133, and 1182.

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## **Pastoral Reflection on the Sacrament of Confirmation**

**Bishop Alvaro Corrada, SJ  
October 7, 2005, Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary**

- 1) As your bishop and successor of the apostles amongst you, I desire to hand down the *traditio* received from the Lord Jesus and His apostles. In light of this mission, I offer these theological and pastoral observations in response to the request from the Presbyteral and Diaconal Councils for an articulation of theology and practical administration of the Sacrament of Confirmation in the Diocese of Tyler. In addressing this request, I find it necessary to look closely at the interconnectedness of the Sacraments of Initiation to one another and to the Sacrament of Penance. In this Year of the Eucharist, I call particular attention to the relationship of the Sacrament of Confirmation to the Eucharist. This reflection on the Sacrament of Confirmation also necessarily touches upon the diocesan processes of Christian Initiation, Liturgical Renewal, and the Call to Holiness. I present this reflection to the clergy and lay people of the diocese for your ongoing formation and prayerful consideration. Over the last four years as your bishop, I have often spoken about the substance of this reflection with the priests and permanent deacons (at clergy days and with the Presbyteral and Diaconal Councils) and with the faithful and our lay parish leadership at the Diocesan Ministry Conferences and other meetings.
  
- 2) The great Pope John Paul II, continuing the call of Vatican II, encouraged the Church to look at our pastoral programs and to reflect upon them in light of Christ so that we might live more deeply the Paschal Mystery and bear witness to the Gospel before the world. In the Diocese of Tyler, we have labored to carry out this renewal by fostering the processes of Christian Initiation, Liturgical Renewal, and the Call to Holiness. This experience has brought to light a number of questions regarding the meaning and practice of the Sacrament of Confirmation in our diocese. To find suitable answers, it is essential that we consider both the authentic theology of the Sacrament of Confirmation and concrete pastoral practices. I believe that in our diocese Confirmation has suffered from some inadequate pastoral practices and theological rationales that have tended to isolate Confirmation from its relation to the other Sacraments of Initiation in the mission of the Church. I wish to invite the Diocese of Tyler to take a fresh look at Confirmation as a Sacrament of Initiation as it impacts the public worship and witness of the Church in East Texas.
  
- 3) Because the Sacraments of Initiation are the foundation of our life in Christ, the Church desires that all her members should receive and live these Sacraments at the deepest level in the liturgy and throughout their lives. This is the only way the Church continues her apostolic mission of evangelization, announcing the Call to Holiness to the whole world. Vatican II observes *A*the classes and duties of life are many, but holiness is one—that sanctity which is cultivated by all who are moved by the Spirit of God, ¶@ (LG 41) The fullest participation in the

Christian life finds its most sublime liturgical expression in the celebration of the Eucharist, in which the Church, in all her members, is united in a singular fashion in Christ's saving sacrifice of love. For this reason, the celebration of the Eucharist may be called the source and summit of the Church's life and evangelical witness. (see SC 10)

4) Perfect union with God through Christ is the fulfillment of every human heart and mind. Apart from this communion we are lost and can never find rest. God has chosen to express His love for us and to open the way to communion with Himself through the saving events of Christ's life, death, and resurrection. It is this truth and love of God, at work in Christ, which is the origin and goal of our lives and anchors our freedom. God has chosen to convey to us a participation in this love by uniting us to Christ and His saving work. This love comes to us by the power of the Holy Spirit when we are sacramentally initiated into the Paschal Mystery of Christ; whereby dying with Him to our former way of life, we rise to a new life sharing the glory of His resurrection and ascension. We live this mystery by our daily Christian life of prayer, self-denial, and works of mercy. By living out the dying and rising of Christ in this way, we bear witness to God's love and grow in holiness.

5) We can see, then, the relationship of the Sacraments of Initiation to the liturgy and to the Call to Holiness. The sacraments draw humanity into the truth and love of God revealed in Christ, thereby disposing the faithful to live this love more deeply in their daily lives of Christian freedom and witness. The celebration of the sacraments are themselves supreme witnesses to the truth of the Gospel. Above all, this is true of the Eucharist, during which the Gospel message and the Church are made manifest (see SC 6-8, LG 26). The relation of Baptism and Confirmation to the Eucharist becomes clear; each prepares a person to take his appointed place within the life of the Church. Baptism makes one a member of Christ's Body, the Church, sharing in the apostolic mission as a child of God offering Him spiritual worship (see CCC 1213). Confirmation is given to strengthen the baptized that they might be more perfectly bound to the Church and, as true witnesses of Christ, spread and defend the faith by word and deed (see CCC 1287). Like Christ, the confirmed have been anointed by God to bring glad tidings (see Luke 4:18). In the Eucharist, those who have received the baptismal priesthood and the anointing of confirmation publicly proclaim the Gospel in union with the whole Church as they participate in the Lord's own sacrifice (see CCC 1322). Thus, fully-initiated Christians render glory to God, grow in holiness, and announce the Good News until Christ comes again in glory.

### **Confirmation in relation to the Eucharist**

6) From the days of the early Christians the great sign of being joined together as the community of the Church was their communion in the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, the Breaking of the Bread. Eucharistic communion, along with acceptance of the apostolic teaching and manner of life, was a sign of the communion of life for the early Christians (see Acts 2:42). This communion of believers was based on their having been baptized and confirmed by the apostles. Early Christians noted that "*communio sanctorum*" could mean both "the communion of saints" and the "communion of the holy things." It was recognized that communion in the holy things of Christ was the foundation of communion with each other in the

Church. Holy Communion in the Eucharist expresses and fosters the Holy Communion which is the Church. It is in sharing in the sacrifice of Christ that we are saved.

7) The early Christians entered the communion of the Church through baptism and the laying on of hands. Baptism and Confirmation introduced Christians into the life of the community and prepared them to celebrate the Eucharistic sacrifice and to share in the One Bread and the One Cup. Receiving the Body of Christ in the Eucharist, they became fully members of His Body, the Church.

8) Living and celebrating the Eucharist is the summit of an authentic program of Christian initiation, of liturgical piety, and of the Call to Holiness. To live as a Christian means to put the gift of baptismal rebirth into effect, a gift which is strengthened in Confirmation and nourished through regular participation at Mass (see Synod #16). Full participation in the Eucharist and the life of the Church therefore entails having been confirmed.

9) Why, then, are not all those who participate in the Eucharistic sacrifice and banquet confirmed members of the Church? This situation is at the root of the pastoral questions facing the Diocese of Tyler

## **I. Confirmation in relation to the Christian Life**

### **Confirmation in relation to Baptism**

10) Like all Sacraments, Confirmation was instituted by Christ. In the early Church we hear that after Baptism the Apostles would impose their hands upon Christians for the reception of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-17; Hebrews 6:2). Confirmation corresponds to this laying on of hands, which in time came to include an anointing with Sacred Chrism. In the first centuries, this usually meant that baptism and confirmation were celebrated in unison. From the earliest times, then, Confirmation has been closely connected to the Sacrament of Baptism and to a sense of apostolic mission. These connections have been maintained across the centuries despite diverse cultural and pastoral situations.

11) Our practice in the Western Church has preserved in a strong way the connection with the apostolic laying on of hands. As it became more difficult for the bishop to visit the many distant parishes of his diocese and personally to baptize all new Christians (many of whom were newborn infants), the celebration of Confirmation began to take place at some time after baptism when the bishop could be the celebrant. In this way, each person's baptismal process was completed by the father and the visible head of the particular Church. It must be clear that the ordinary minister of Confirmation is the bishop. The priest confirms only when given the faculty to do so by the bishop. The role of the bishop in the Western Church as the ordinary minister of the sacrament is important as a sign of the visible communion of the confirmed with the local and universal Church.

12) The majority of Eastern Rite Catholics (and most Eastern Orthodox) have preserved the

close connection between Baptism and Confirmation, which they call Chrismation, by celebrating the two sacraments at the same time. Typically, the celebrant is a priest rather than a bishop. The apostolic aspects of the sacrament are maintained by the use of "Myron" (chrism oil) consecrated by the bishop and by the fact that the priest exercises the apostolic ministry because of his ordination at the hands of the bishop. The simultaneous celebration of these two sacraments, theologically and pastorally legitimate for Eastern Catholics, is not kept as such in the Latin Rite because of our unique history and canon law.

13) The ordinary pastoral practice in the Latin Church is for Confirmation to be administered by the bishop at some point after a child reaches the age of reason in accord with Church law. The Catechism of the Council of Trent (published in 1566 by decree of Pope Pius V) indicated that there was good reason for the Sacrament of Confirmation to be given at the age of reason (at least seven years old) (Roman Catechism, p.208) Presently, in the USA the age for Confirmation is between the age of discretion and about sixteen years of age, as established by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and approved by the Holy See (USCCB, 2002) One should note that the use of reason was never considered essential for the validity of the sacrament and, in fact, priests have permission to administer Confirmation to any baptized person in danger of death regardless of age or use of reason. This provision indicates that the Sacraments are gifts which we receive and which perfect us, not in any way rights which we have earned or expressions of changes that we ourselves have initiated. Even the soul of a child a year or two old benefits from reception of the perfecting grace of Confirmation and should not be deprived of it in the face of death. Pastoral situations have arisen at various times and places in the Latin Rite of the Catholic Church which have led to priests being authorized to confirm infants at the time of baptism routinely, although this is not the case in the United States.

14) With the introduction of the Rites of Christian Initiation for Adults in 1974, priests in the United States have been delegated the faculty to confirm adults being baptized and baptized adults entering into full communion with the Church with delegation from the local bishop. The RCIA process is appropriately applied to all children over the age of reason, and in recent years this has become the common practice in much of the United States.

### **Some observations on pastoral practice**

15) In the beginning of the twentieth century, children would have received First Communion very near the time of their Confirmation, generally at about the age of twelve. When Pope Pius X defined the age for First Communion to be as young as seven, the same age of reason that was in use for the celebration of First Reconciliation, it was designed to increase liturgical participation and the living of the Christian life and one can imagine it was an innovation that surprised some. In *Quam Singulari*, Pope Pius X set forth that children in fact had an obligation toward both confession and reception of communion at the age of reason. While the age for First Communion was lowered, the celebration of Confirmation did not seem directly affected, and it was left at about age twelve. This further strained in practice the connection between Eucharist and Confirmation. There were some places that celebrated a First Solemn Communion at the time of Confirmation, four or five years after "First Holy Communion" at

the age of reason, but even where this was done, the catechesis did not focus on a conscious connection between these Sacraments.

16) Throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, the common pastoral approach to Confirmation in our diocesan territory in Texas emphasized coming into maturity of faith by embracing life as a Soldier for Christ or affirming one's personal faith in Christ. These approaches were certainly not without reason. At a time when fewer people completed high school and many people were going into the workplace before they completed eighth grade, age twelve or thirteen may have seemed a natural point of maturity and appropriate for Confirmation. In keeping with this perspective, many places in the United States increased the age of Confirmation during the last forty years to the end of high school. This has only exaggerated the gap between Confirmation and Eucharist. Sadly, as the age of Confirmation moved higher, fewer people availed themselves of this important Sacrament. The result is more people participating in Mass and daily life without being fully sacramentally initiated into Christ and the Church. Despite variations in the timing for the celebrating the Sacraments, theologically the order of the Sacraments of Initiation has remained the same: Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist, which is preceded by the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

### **Confirmation in the life of Grace**

17) The Sacrament of Confirmation completes the baptismal grace. That is, the Holy Spirit, first received in Baptism, now strengthens the Christian, binding him more perfectly to Christ and the Church so that, as a true witness of Christ, he might spread and defend the faith by word and deed (see CCC 1285). Thus it is not accurate to connect Confirmation to maturity in the psychological sense so that it would best be given at an age of social maturity. The Sacrament of Confirmation strengthens the person to bear witness, rather than expresses the person's determination to bear witness, to his faith. This strengthening is something that can be fittingly given at any age. By the reception of Confirmation, the Christian is given the grace to take his place in the life and apostolic mission of the Church. That mission is, first of all, to go out to all the world and witness to the Gospel of Christ. This witness is carried out in word and deed, in sacrament and service, by the power and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, with the guidance of the Apostles and their successors. The premier expression of the Gospel, the great act of Witness, the prolongation and fulfillment of the apostolic mission, is the worship of God and the salvation of man effected in the Paschal Mystery celebrated in the Eucharist. For a Christian publicly to take his place in the Eucharistic assembly is the greatest participation in the apostolic mission of the Church that is imaginable. The greatness of the Martyrs is found here: in their daily lives they lived fully what they celebrated at Mass. The two Sacraments at the service of communion, Holy Orders and Matrimony, serve to build up the people of God in living out of this great Mystery in their Call to Holiness.

18) It is through the grace of Baptism and Confirmation that the Holy Spirit and the Church prepares a person for full communion in the Holy Eucharist. Reception of the Eucharist prior to receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation may create some confusion in the community or in the

person. Anyone who professes the true faith and participates in the sacrifice of Christ, receiving the Body and Blood of Christ, should be a fully initiated Christian through both Baptism and Confirmation, in as much as they are participating in the full, public worship and witness of the Church. They are fulfilling the apostolic mandate given by Christ: "Do this in memory of me." They are sharing in the pre-eminent work of Christ Himself, the first and greatest work of the Church: proclaiming the Paschal Mystery until Christ comes in glory to bring it to completion (SC 7-8). They are responding to the Call to Holiness. They ought, therefore, to be fully prepared for the life and mission they now share by being confirmed in the Holy Spirit prior to being initiated into the Eucharist. This participation does not depend on human gifts, talents, or age; it depends on truth and love. We can only love because God has first loved us. God conveys His love through Christ, the way, the truth and the life, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and chief among the instruments He uses are the Sacraments of Initiation.

19) Confirmation not only strengthens us and sets us aside as witnesses to the apostolic mission. This strengthening by the Holy Spirit also helps us to overcome the tendency to sin which remains in each of us even after Baptism. The gifts of the Holy Spirit foster the formation of supernatural virtue as well as strengthening the natural virtues in the human person. Confirmation cannot be properly looked at as a single event, done and then forgotten, like some type of >immunization= or >graduation=. Confirmation establishes an ongoing relationship with God which animates the ongoing growth in holiness which is the vocation (or call) of all the baptized. The gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit strengthen our souls by enabling a virtuous exercise of our will and our faculties for the Glory of God. Unduly delaying Confirmation for those who already receive Holy Communion fails to accord the person their proper role in the Eucharistic assembly, the life of the Church, and the strengthening of the sacraments. Worse than that, it could entail a denial of their right within the Church to receive the gift of the sacrament once they have met the conditions required by canon law: the age of reason and proper disposition of soul (i.e., in a state of grace and open to receiving the sacrament). (Canon 843)

20) Sometimes in our activist and production-oriented American society and culture we succumb to pragmatism looking at the Christian life and our sharing in the apostolic mission of the Church as a matter being able to do things for Christ, the Church or others. In fact, the Christian life is a gift and a call to truth and love given to us by God. It is first a matter of "being," of simply existing as a person created by God and redeemed by Him in Christ. We live out this truth and love in specific ways according to our age, talents, and unique vocation. At no point are the sacraments about what we have done or promise to do for God. They are God's free gift of grace to us. At the same time, these gifts of love entail an obligation to bear witness to God's love in word and deed by our collaboration in freedom with the grace given.

21) If one is not careful, service projects before Confirmation can seem to be demonstrating an ability to do things, and Confirmation becomes a type of graduation into an adult faith. This abuse of pragmatism can result in failing to recognize that the desire to do or to praise God is itself a grace, as is the capacity to do good (Weekday Preface IV).

22) These ideas reveal a common misunderstanding of Confirmation by some, and as Bishop

I want to take this opportunity to address them. Confirmation is not about an individual deciding to embrace the faith of Baptism. It is not a human act similar to that of non-Catholic Christians who, perhaps in their early teens, choose to publicly profess that they have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Sacraments are primarily about God choosing and embracing us not the other way around. In baptism, God marks us unconditionally as a member of His family and co-heir with Christ, children by adoption. (see Galatians 4:5-7) Once baptized, at whatever age, we can no more choose to cease being a child of God than we can choose to cease being the child of our natural mother. Confirmation is not our "confirming" Baptism or our faith in Christ; it is Christ confirming us in the Christian life we are already living. It is particularly important in East Texas that we avoid any sacramental catechesis that reflects the notion that Confirmation is a time for the person to individually embrace the faith or to become personally engaged in the work of the Church. It is in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, particularly at the offertory, that we present ourselves as a sacrifice to the Father. Indeed, each moment of daily life is a time to reaffirm the Call to Holiness by a commitment to love of God and neighbor. Each instant calls us to embrace Christ as He has embraced us. Above all, the celebration of the Eucharist is an appropriate sacramental moment for the individual to renew the commitment to service in the Church and in the community for the common good

### **Confirmation and the Sacrament of Penance**

23) The Sacrament of Penance also allows us to renew our commitment to truth and service by restoring sanctifying grace and increasing actual grace in our souls. In Penance we become reconciled with God through the confession of our sins, desire to amend our life, and acceptance of acts of reparation. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is closely tied to Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist, restoring the bonds of communion established by the Sacraments of Initiation that have been subsequently weakened by venial sin and imperfections or broken by mortal sin. The grace of repentance from our sins is necessary for salvation. The Sacrament of Penance is ordinarily needed for the forgiveness of mortal sin and the return to sanctifying grace and the Eucharist. This explains why the Sacrament of Penance was considered in the early Church a type of "second Baptism" that restores the life of grace and reorders the penitent to the life of the Church and the celebration of the Eucharist. Throughout the history of the Church, frequent Confession has been recognized as a premier means of renewing one's commitment to Christ and for growing in holiness. Without penitence, that ongoing conversion expressed daily in prayer, self-denial, and works of mercy, our personal salvation is in danger because without penitence we are not living the Sacraments of Initiation fully; we are not united to Christ in dying completely to ourselves out of love for God and neighbor. This ongoing conversion, fostered in a particular way by the Sacrament of Penance, is necessary for encountering and adoring the All Holy God in a spirit of truth and purity of heart.

24) This explains the role of the Sacrament of Penance. It is about living the Sacraments of Initiation in the face of sinful inclinations and actions. Confession fosters and, if necessary, restores the life conferred in Baptism and Confirmation and nourished in the Eucharist. We confess not only when we have committed mortal sin, but regularly because we may have committed venial sins and have imperfections and we acknowledge that we need the help of God's grace to fulfill our desire to love God and neighbor perfectly in Christ. This

understanding of Confession, which is that of the Saints and Doctors of the Church, is one that can be taught to anyone who has reached the age of reason regardless of whether they have received any sacrament beyond baptism. This understanding allows the Sacrament of Penance to emerge in its beauty as God's gift to us in our journey to Holiness rather than a painful process reserved for mortal sinners. It is seen for what it actually is an aid to living fully our sacramental lives.

25) It is fitting, then, that baptized Christians approaching Confirmation and the Table of the Lord be introduced into the fruitful celebration of the Sacrament of Penance as a regular part of the life of a Christian disciple. Preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation requires the same spiritual readiness of being in the state of grace, and of responding to the constant call to conversion that is essential for our daily Christian life and the worthy reception of the Eucharist. Let us consider the special affinity between the Sacrament of Penance, which aids us in the struggle for holiness, and Confirmation, which strengthens the Christian to bear faithful witness. Both sacraments aid us in our efforts to avoid the things that lead to sin in the face of our tendencies to sin that remain within us after Baptism. A Christian who is awaiting Confirmation or the Eucharist would not want to receive either sacrament without the renewal of baptismal grace available in the Sacrament of Penance. When we are in a state of mortal sin, cut off from communion with Christ and dead to the Christian life, we should not dare approach these sacraments of the Christian life until we are restored to communion with Christ. It is through an act of repentance and the Sacrament of Penance that we are reconciled to God and others through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

## **II. Pastoral Considerations**

### **Changes in the households of faith**

26) In 1852, the First Plenary Council of Baltimore directed establishing parish communities as the locus for the celebration of the sacraments and the establishment of institutions of Catholic education. One hundred years ago, the Catholic Church in the United States was part of a society where the extended family was fairly strong and often immigrant. Most Catholic families became reasonably well-established in an urban or farming area and had relatives living near them, which offered them a natural faith community. Further, a greater number of Catholics attended church, and most had an education in their faith similar to their overall formal education. The American society in general was more religiously minded then, and Catholics lived in a more Catholic culture, supported by older relatives who were living the faith. This supported an organic religious formation for the children and the whole community.

27) Since the mid-twentieth century, for many reasons, there has been marked increase in the mobility of Catholics within the United States and a movement to a suburban style of life. At the same time, there has been a decline in the presence of Catholic schools and the stability of catechesis, further weakening the directives of the Councils of Baltimore. These changes have been so severe that many Catholic parents and grandparents are now hard-pressed to give an explanation of the faith to their children and grandchildren. Adult formation is imperative if we

are to help Catholic adults live and share their faith. Truly we have reached the point that the significance of celebrating and living the Sacraments has to be consciously put forward to the entire family, not just the children.

28) In the Diocese of Tyler, these cultural changes in the households of faith are often even more manifest. We are firmly located in the Bible Belt, an area noted for conservative Christian values, but not historically very open to Catholicism. Over the past fifty years many have come into the fullness of the truth by joining the Catholic Church. In addition, many more Catholics have moved into the East Texas area, and some Catholic families have put down strong roots in the East Texas soil. However, many of our Catholic families are comparatively new arrivals in the area and many have no extended families nearby. Moreover, there is not a strong native Catholic presence in most of our civil communities. Many of our parishes are new to the communities they serve and seek to evangelize.

29) East Texas also has an increasing number of new immigrants from rural areas of Mexico where people may have encountered a priest one or two times a year, or at most once a month. Often they need initiation into the Sacraments as well as needing to be integrated into their new Catholic communities and our society. These immigrants have to be introduced to the three processes of Christian Initiation, Liturgical Renewal, and the Call to Holiness as well as the proper reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation and the two sacraments at service of communion: Marriage and the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

30) The celebration of the Sacraments provides a natural opportunity to draw the entire household of faith, and the parish community, more deeply into the Mystery of Christ. At whatever age the Sacrament of Confirmation is celebrated, it will be important to continue to move catechesis away from merely preparing children in a classroom for sacraments and toward helping the parents and children to understand and live as a family the Christian life they receive in those sacraments.

### **Appropriate age and level of Catechesis**

31) Pope John Paul II recalled in *ARise, Let Us Be On Our Way!* that children are the present and the future of the Church. They play an active role in evangelization of the world and with their prayers help to save and improve it. (Synod #17) The experience of the last one hundred years has demonstrated a tremendous spiritual and pastoral benefit from allowing children to receive the Eucharist at the age of reason. Today, this approach seems even more necessary because many children attain the use of reason and are subject to dangers and temptations at an early age. Reception of Holy Communion at the age of reason affirms the primacy of grace, which has brought great help to young people and great benefits to the Church. (Synod #17).

32) It is desirable to set the expectations for Catechesis for the Sacrament of Confirmation to an age appropriate level of maturity. Just as an adult has, hopefully, a better grasp of the mystery of the Eucharist than they did when they received Communion for the first time, one would not

expect a seven year old to understand the Sacraments as deeply as a sixteen year old, nor as deeply as an adult.

33) The process of the Call to Holiness requires ongoing growth and training in the faith. It will be important to expand our efforts to strengthen lifelong learning in the faith as a part of every Christian's life. This will be one of the major changes necessary for us. Catechesis of the young will have to move from being about preparation for receiving Sacraments to living the Sacraments they have received. This is entirely in keeping with the processes introduced in the Diocese of Tyler: Christian Initiation, Liturgical Renewal, and Call to Holiness. We will need to develop a Catechesis for the Call to Holiness. Such a catechesis, by its very nature, is not limited to children and does not end at eighth or twelfth grade but continues through our adult life and ends only with death. By God's grace, we are aided in this final passing through the Sacrament of Anointing, Viaticum, and the funeral liturgies which bring us to the Hope of Eternal Life.

### **The experience of the Christian Initiation process in the Diocese of Tyler**

34) In the three years since the Christian Initiation process has been put forth in our Diocese, we have received many blessings as whole families have been brought into the Church, being initiated into the Sacraments and integrated into the community of faith. Initially there was resistance to the Church's norm that unbaptized children over the age of seven should receive Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist together with their parents when the family comes into the Church. By now, the experience of children coming into Full Communion at the age of seven with Confirmation and Eucharist has been very positively received in most parishes and missions in the diocese.

35) The Year of the Eucharist has brought our diocese to a deeper realization of the importance for every Christian to participate in the Eucharist by being fully initiated into the Paschal Mystery of Christ.

36) A tension is arising in our parishes and missions when non-Catholic children between the ages of seven and twelve enter the Church through the process of Christian Initiation, receive Confirmation and so participate fully in the life of the Church while Catholic children, baptized as infants, will not be confirmed until they are twelve to sixteen. This raises the question of whether in an area like East Texas, it would be better to initiate baptized Catholics through a similar practice. So we face the question: Should Catholic children, baptized as infants, celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation before they receive the Eucharist?

### **Conclusion**

37) In light of this reflection and the pastoral reality of the Diocese of Tyler, and having discussed this important question with the priests, deacons, and members of the lay faithful, as Bishop of the Diocese of Tyler, I am directing that our catechetical and pastoral practices shall encourage parents, as the primary educators of their children, to present their children for the Sacrament of Confirmation and then First Eucharist at about eight years of age after appropriate

preparation. First Reconciliation shall be encouraged after they have reached the age of seven and been prepared to begin regular celebration of Confession as part of the call to conversion and the Call to Holiness. The ongoing catechesis of both children and adults will focus on the apostolic mission of their Call to Holiness and their participation in the liturgical and apostolic life of the Church. As your Bishop, I ask for the cooperation of the clergy and laity as we seek to preserve the tradition of faith, morals, and the doctrine of the Church which has been handed down to us.

Sources:

CCC B Catechism of the Catholic Church

LG B *Lumen Gentium*, The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Vatican II.

SC B *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Vatican II.

Synod B Working Paper for the 2005 Synod on the Eucharist, Vatican Synod Secretariat.

Roman Catechist B Catechism of the Council of Trent, published under Pope Pius V, 1566, reprinted by Tan Publishers.

USCCB B Complimentary Norms for Canon 891, published with approval of the Holy See, February 28, 2002.

**Frequently Asked Questions about the Sacrament of Confirmation**  
**Most Rev. Alvaro Corrada, SJ**  
**September 19, 2005**  
**Expanded November 2, 2005**

**What is a Sacrament?** An efficacious sign of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us through the work of the Holy Spirit. (CCC Glossary) Since Sacraments are signs of grace instituted by Christ, they cannot be changed or eliminated as such. The administration of the sacraments is regulated by the Church and cannot be altered by bishop, priest, deacons or lay people.

**How is grace given through sacramental signs?** Jesus Christ continues his priestly ministry in a special way through the sacraments. "From the moment that the sacrament is celebrated in accordance with the intention of the Church, the power of Christ and His Spirit acts in and through it, independently of the personal holiness of the minister. Nevertheless, the fruits of the sacraments also depend on the disposition of the one who receives them." (CCC 1128) "Sacramental grace" is the grace of the Holy Spirit, given by Christ and proper to each sacrament. The Spirit heals and transforms those who receive Him by conforming them to the Son of God. The fruit of the sacramental life is that the Spirit of adoption makes the faithful partakers in the divine nature by uniting them in a living union with the only Son, the Savior. (CCC 1128)

**What is grace?** The free and undeserved gift that God gives us to respond to our vocation to become his adopted children. (CCC Glossary) Grace is a sharing in the life and love which is God. (CCC 1997) "Our justification comes from the grace of God. Grace is favor, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God, adopted sons, partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life." (CCC 1996, Cf Jn 1:12ff; 17:3 Rom 8:14ff; 2 Peter 1:3-4)

**What is Confirmation?** One of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation, together with Baptism and Eucharist. Confirmation completes the grace of Baptism by a special out pouring of the Holy Spirit, which seals or "confirms" the baptized in union with Christ and equip them for active participation in the worship and apostolic life of the Church. (CCC Glossary)

**What is the effect of Confirmation? Or What is the "special out pouring of the Holy Spirit"?** This can be looked at as two fold: the Holy Spirit confirms us (brings us more fully) into the apostolic mission of the Church, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit help the baptized person overcome the tendency to sin which remains in each of us, even after sin is removed in Baptism.

**I had heard that in Confirmation a person makes a personal commitment to the promises made for them in Baptism and takes on an adult responsibility to be of service to the mission of Christ. Is this what the Church really believes?** No, in fact the Eucharist is really the sacrament in which we personally affirm our commitment to Christ and the call of our Baptism. It is also in the Eucharist that we are sent out into the world to give witness. The end of Mass is a commissioning or a sending forth, "go in peace to love and serve the Lord."

**What is the “apostolic life of the Church”?** The living of the Christian faith as handed on to us from the Apostles whom Christ selected, trained, and commissioned. This includes worship of God (the Mass and the sacraments) and the service of others for the love of God. Bishops are successors of the apostolic college founded by Christ – continuing in our day the “apostolic life” of the Church he founded.

**Why is the Bishop the ordinary minister of Confirmation?** The Bishop, as successor to the Apostles, is a visible link to the Apostolic faith and to the visible communion of the Church. Hence, the Bishop is the ordinary minister of Confirmation. Presbyters who collaborate with the Bishop in the apostolic ministry entrusted to him, can at times be called upon to confer the sacrament of Confirmation by delegation from the Bishop.

**Has Confirmation been celebrated the same way for 2,000 years?** While Confirmation has been celebrated since the time of the Apostles, in part the external format for the way of celebrating has changed over the years. In establishing the sacraments Christ entrusts the particulars of their administration to the Church.

**Is it best to celebrate Confirmation sometime after First Communion?** For baptized Catholics it is legitimate to celebrate Confirmation after First Communion, but it is not the “best” practice. Until 100 years ago, Confirmation and First Communion would have been celebrated at the same time. In *Quam Singulari* (1906) Pope Pius X approved that First Communion should be given to children at about seven years of age. At this time it became common practice for Confirmation to come several years after First Eucharist. But this practice fails to connect Confirmation appropriately to the Eucharist, which is the sign of full Communion. In RCIA, for example, the Church insists that Confirmation should ordinarily precede reception of First Communion for those over the age of reason (about seven years of age).

**It is good to celebrate Confirmation at an older age so that people will continue to come to Religious Education, right?** No. Sacraments are not a prize to be used to motivate Catholics to receive catechesis. All those who are confirmed should be continuing to grow in their faith. Sadly, many adults learned that they didn’t have to study their faith once they had “gotten” Confirmation. Looking at the sacraments as a type of graduation is counter-productive. Preparation for a sacrament should lead people to a deeper conversion, a deeper response to the Call to Holiness in their life. Preparation should not be a set of hoops one has to go through to get a sacrament. After Confirmation opportunities need to be provided for both young and old to continue their journey as a Christian disciple.

**Was it “wrong” for a Catholic to be Confirmed after they celebrated First Communion?** No, provided the sacrament was celebrated in accord with the rituals and directives of the Church. The Sacrament of Confirmation may be validly received after the Eucharist. The proposed pastoral practice will be made to more fittingly initiate a Catholic into the Paschal Mystery of Christ. Throughout the years the Church has welcomed authentic developments in the practice of celebrating the sacraments.

**Whose idea was this?** Jesus originated the seven Sacraments. The Christian Initiation Team for the Diocese of Tyler surfaced to the Bishop the increasing tension created by initiating Catholics and non-Catholics in different ways. This led to the Bishop inquiring amongst the clergy and lay leaders if perhaps we should adjust our practice to celebrate Confirmation before First Eucharist for both Catholics and non-Catholics.

**Are other dioceses doing the same thing?** Some are, but the Diocese of Tyler is approaching this from the perspective of the process of Christian Initiation. Many of the other dioceses are coming from a catechetical or liturgical perspective.

**Will the bishop continue to Confirm our Catholic young people?** Bishop Corrada feels very strongly about the Sacrament of Confirmation and will continue as has been his practice to ordinarily confer the Sacrament of Confirmation for each community. As has been necessary on occasion in the past, the bishop may need to at times to delegate a particular Confirmation to a priest of the diocese.

**Isn't celebration of First Eucharist supposed to be done in the month of May?** No. First Eucharist can be done at any time during the year. Generally the Lenten and Advent seasons would not be a good time. It maybe that communities would celebrate Confirmation and First Eucharist in the fall, instead of in the spring. Communities with a large number of young people seeking the Sacraments might have Confirmation and First Eucharist at multiple occasions during the year.

**Is there a recommended grade for Confirmation and First Eucharist?** No. The formation for celebrating the Sacraments should be moved out of the classroom/school model and into a process more like RCIA. We are suggesting that children are prepared to be ready to celebrate Confirmation and First Eucharist at about the age of 8.

**How soon should a child begin to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation?** When they have reached the use of reason so as to begin understanding the reality of sin in their life and they can seek God's help to do better in the future to respond to God's love. Generally this is about 7 years of age.

**Is there a special ceremony required for First Reconciliation?** No. Not required. A community might invite the households with people preparing for First Reconciliation to attend a Penance service in the parish, or the young people could be brought when ready to the regular time of Confessions.

**Should children receive First Communion at the same Mass as they receive Confirmation?**  
Generally yes.

**What is the proper name for the Sacrament whereby we receive absolution for sin?** The Sacrament of Reconciliation, also called the Sacrament of Penance, and sometimes called Confession. While there is a slight difference in the significance of the alternative names, they refer to the same reality and the Church uses them all.

**Since a child generally had attended Mass numerous times before they celebrate their First Communion, is it appropriate to refer to it as First Eucharist?** Yes, either First Eucharist or First Communion can be used. First Eucharist emphasizes that it is about their participation more fully in the entire Eucharistic celebration by full, conscious and active participation. The most important thing is their joining themselves to Christ in the Liturgy, that participation is experienced most fully in reception of Communion. Communion is a deepening relationship with Christ and His Church, it is not just about getting Communion.

**What is the “age of discretion”?** The ‘age of discretion’ (also called the ‘age of reason’) is the age at which one is presumed to have sufficient use of reason. (See Canon 11, 891, 889) In the Code of Canon law this is presumed on ones seventh birthday. Note: It is possible that someone not have sufficient use of reason at seven, typically this might be the case for a person with a developmental problem.

Where can I find more information? [www.dioceseoftyler.org/confirmation](http://www.dioceseoftyler.org/confirmation)

# The Fifteen Goals With Rationales

**Fifteen Goals** have been established by Bishop Alvaro Corrada, SJ for the Diocese of Tyler. These goals are ordered in a progression of systematic study of theology based on the four pillars of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. There are rationales listed for each goal which constitute the validity for that goal. The rationales and concepts are excerpted from two resources: *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) and *Dominus Jesus* (DJ). It is essential that the rationales and the key concepts listed under each goal are understood by the catechist and taught in order for the successful transmission of the faith.

## PROFESSION OF FAITH

### #1: Recognize God as Trinity.

#### Rationales:

- **CCC 234:** *The Mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life. It is the most fundamental and essential teaching in the "hierarchy of the truths of faith.*
- **CCC 240:** *Jesus revealed that God is Father. He is eternally Father in relation to His only Son. The Holy Spirit is sent to the Apostles and to the Church both by the Father in the nature of the Son, and by the Son in person.*
- **CCC 244:** *The sending of the person of the Spirit after Jesus' glorification reveals in its fullness the mystery of the Holy Trinity.*
- **DJ 5:** *In fact, it must be firmly believed that, in the mystery of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God who is the way the truth and the life, the full revelation of divine truth is given.*

### #2: Present an understanding of the human need for a personal relationship with Jesus Christ based on revelation and faith.

#### Rationales:

- **CCC 27:** *The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to Himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for.*

- ***DJ 14: It must be firmly believed as a truth of Catholic faith that the universal salvific will of the One and Triune God is offered and accomplished once for all in the mystery of the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Son of God.***

<b><i>Essential concepts for understanding and teaching this goal.</i></b>
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- CCC 396 Man is dependent on his Creator and subject to the laws of creation and to the moral norms that govern the use of freedom.
- CCC 397 Man, tempted by the devil, let his trust in his Creator die in his heart, and abusing his freedom, disobeyed God's command.
- CCC 398 Man chose himself over God against the requirements of his creaturely status and against his own good.
- CCC 405 **Original sin** is a deprivation of original holiness and justice, but human nature has not been totally corrupted: it is wounded in the natural powers proper to it; subject to ignorance, suffering, and the dominion of death; and inclined to sin- an inclination to evil that is called "**concupiscence.**"
- CCC 407-409 The dramatic situation of the world makes the life of every man and woman a battle to go to heaven.
- CCC 1996-2005 **Grace** is participation in the life of God. It introduces us into the intimacy of Trinitarian life: by Baptism the Christian participates in the grace of Christ, the Head of his body.
- CCC 1849-1869 **Sin** is an offense against reason, truth, and right conscience; it is a failure in genuine love for God and neighbor caused by a perverse attachment to certain goods. The gospel is the revelation in Jesus Christ of God's mercy to sinners.
- CCC 385-395 **The Fall** is the biblical revelation about the reality of sin in human history. It is a fall from God's friendship and grace which the first human beings had received not only for themselves but for the whole human race.
- CCC 387, 1730-1742 **Freedom & Sin:** Freedom is the power, rooted in reason and will, to act or not to act, to do this or that, and so to perform deliberate actions on one's own responsibility. By free will one shapes one's own life. Only in the knowledge of God's plan for man can we grasp that sin is an abuse of the freedom that God gives to created persons so that they are capable of loving him and loving one another.
- CCC 1821, 2794 - 2796 **Heaven** is the full union of the human person with God and of all persons in God. Heaven is the perfect happiness that comes from sharing in God's divine life.
- CCC 1030-1032 **Purgatory** is the process through which we are cleansed or purged of the selfishness that keeps us even minimally separated from God.
- CCC 1030-1037 **Hell** is the experience of final alienation and estrangement from God, isolation and separation from all that is good. Hell is the experience of eternal punishment for grave and unrepented sin.

**#3: Illustrate a basic understanding of doctrine and dogma in light of the creed.**

**Rationales:**

***<CCC 90: The mutual connections between dogmas and their coherence can be found in the whole of the Revelation of the mystery of Christ. In Catholic doctrine there exists an order of "hierarchy" of***

*truths, since they vary in their relation to the foundation of Christian faith.*

< *DJ 1: The Church's universal mission is born from the command of Jesus Christ and is fulfilled in the course of the centuries in the proclamation of the mystery of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and the mystery of the incarnation of the Son, as saving event for all of humanity.*

<*DJ 5: It must be firmly believed that, in the mystery of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, who is the way, the truth, and the life, the full revelation of divine truth is given.*

#### **#4. Illustrate a basic understanding of Church.**

**Rationales:**

<*CCC 737: The mission of Christ and the Holy Spirit is brought to completion in the Church, which is the Body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit.*

<*DJ 13: The truth of the Jesus Christ, Son of God, Lord and only Savior, who through the event of his incarnation, death and resurrection has brought the history of salvation to fulfillment, and which has in him its fullness and center, must be firmly believed as a constant element of the Church's faith.*

<*DJ 16: The Lord Jesus, the only Savior, did not only establish a simple community of disciples, but constituted the Church as a salvific mystery: he himself is in the Church and the Church is in him.*

#### **#5: Read, understand, interpret and apply Scripture to life.**

**Rationale:**

<*CCC 97: Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God, in which, as in a mirror, the pilgrim Church contemplates God, the source of all her riches.*

#### **#6: Exercise responsibility as caretakers of creation as an expression of our relationship with Jesus Christ.**

**Rationale:**

<*CCC 307: To human beings God even gives the power of freely sharing in His providence by entrusting them with the responsibility of subduing the earth and having dominion over it. God thus enables men to be intelligent and free causes in order to complete the work of creation, to perfect its harmony for their own good and that of their neighbor.*

### **CELEBRATION OF THE CHRISTIAN MYSTERY**

#### **#7: Demonstrate the importance of sacraments, with an**

emphasis on the centrality of the Eucharist, in the life of Catholics.

**Rationales:**

<CCC 1129: *The Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the New Covenant are necessary for salvation.*

< CCC 1324: *The Eucharist is the “source and summit” of the Christian life.*

**#8: Demonstrate an understanding of the faith community as a sharing in the Paschal Mystery of Christ.**

**Rationale:**

<CCC 949: *In the primitive community of Jerusalem, the disciples devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers.*

## **LIFE IN CHRIST**

**#9: Acknowledge and affirm the dignity of the human person and community.**

**Rationale:**

<CCC 1700: *The dignity of the human person is rooted in his creation in the image and likeness of God.*

**#10: Develop a moral conscience grounded in the truth of Jesus Christ.**

**Rationale:**

<CCC 1783: *Conscience must be informed and moral judgment enlightened. A well-formed conscience is upright and truthful. It formulates its judgments according to reason, in conformity with the true good willed by the wisdom of the Creator.*

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**#11: Examine a variety of Christian vocations as a response to the baptismal call.**

**Rationale:**

<CCC 1694: *Incorporated into Christ into Baptism, Christians are “dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” and so participate in the life of the Risen Lord.*

**#12: Apply Catholic principles to interpersonal relations.**

**Rationale:**

*<CCC 1822: Charity is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for His own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God.*

**#13: Know, critique and apply social justice principles to personal and societal situations.**

**Rationale:**

*<CCC 1932: The duty of making oneself a neighbor to others and actively serving them becomes even more urgent when it involves the disadvantaged, in whatever area this may be. "As you did it to the least of my brethren, you did it to me."*

**#14: Engage in service to the community (e.g., family, parish, local, national and global) in response to the Gospel call.**

**Rationale:**

*<CCC 1270: "Reborn as sons of God {the baptized} must profess before men the faith they have received from God through the Church" and participate in the apostolic and missionary activity of the People of God.*

## **CHRISTIAN PRAYER**

**#15: Know and participate in the Catholic tradition of prayer in the name of Jesus Christ.**

**Rationale:**

*< CCC 2663: In the living tradition of prayer, each Church proposes to its faithful, according to its historic, social, and cultural context, a language for prayer: words, melodies, gestures, iconography to God. The Magisterium of the Church has the task of discerning the fidelity of these ways of praying to the tradition of the apostolic faith, always in relation to Jesus Christ.*