

Growing in Our Catholic Faith

Answers to Confirmation Parent/Student Questions - SESSION 1

QUESTIONS ON CONFIRMATION

Why do people get confirmed? What does Confirmation mean to me?

Confirmation is a sacramental outpouring of the Holy Spirit that leaves a permanent imprint on the soul, complete Christian initiation, and empowers us to be witnesses to Christ. (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1302-1305)

What is the spiritual meaning of being confirmed?

1. Roots us more deeply in the divine filiation [being adopted as sons and daughters of God the Father] which makes us cry, "Abba! Father!"
2. Unites us more firmly to Jesus Christ.
3. Increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us (see the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit).
4. Renders our bond with the Church [the Body of Christ] more perfect.
5. Gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly, and never to be ashamed of the Cross.

To be Anointed by the Holy Spirit. To receive the fruits of the Holy Spirit: goodness, kindness, patience, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, love, joy, peace. Fully initiated to be true a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Why do they want to start Confirmation with 3rd grade?

4th Diocesan Synod led by Most. Rev. Bishop Thomas John Papracki had decided to complete the Sacraments of Initiation with 3rd Grade in the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois. When an infant is baptized, he is not confirmed. Our Bishop wants to complete Sacraments of Initiation in 3rd grade, to re-establish the order of the Sacraments of Initiation, Baptism, Confirmation then First Communion. In RCIA, all sacraments of initiation are completed together, baptism, then confirmation, then First Communion.

How Confirmation Started?

On the day of Pentecost: The Holy Spirit descended upon the Blessed Virgin Mary and on the Apostles in the form of fiery tongue. We find it in the New Testament in the book of the Acts of the Apostles 1:8.

QUESTIONS ON CONFESSION

Why is it important to go to Confession? Why can't you just ask for forgiveness in prayer? Why do we have to confess our sins to a priest? Why can't we just talk to God ourselves?

You are called to do both in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. You go to confession to remove your sins and guilt conscience. The priest is the mediator between God and you. He bridges your relationship with God. If you are confessing directly to God through prayer, you do not have any spiritual advice. **Why confess to a priest?** You are meeting Christ in the Sacrament, the sacramental Grace takes the guilt conscience from you through the priest, in the name of God.

Proverbs 28:13 “You will never succeed in life if you try to hide your sins. Confess them and give them up, then God will show mercy upon you.”

Matthew 16:19 “You are Peter and upon this Rock I will build my Church. I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. (to reflect what will happen in the Davidic kingdom, passing down the keys).

Isaiah 22:15-25) Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven, and whatever you lose on earth will be loosed in Heaven.” Peter passes down that authority to forgive and retain sins through Apostolic succession to our Bishops and priests. Mark 8:27-30, Luke 9:18-20, Revelation 3:7.

There is always room for improvement, but what if you do not feel you have anything to confess?

Complete an examination of conscience. Look deeper than the surface of the Ten Commandments. Examine your heart, thoughts, actions, intent or omission. Is God the most important person in your life?

QUESTIONS ON THE MASS

Why are different churches that are all Catholic celebrate mass differently?

The Holy Mass in the Roman Catholic Church is the same everywhere. The Liturgy is universal.

Why do we ring the bells? / Why are the bells important during mass?

They are called Sanctus bells or altar bells and they are rung just before consecration of the bread and wine to make a joyful noise to the Lord in thanksgiving. They are also rung as a sign to bring attention to the fact that a miracle is happening on the altar (bread & wine being consecrated into Jesus’s body & blood).

Why is everything sung in Church? Why can’t we just say it?

Singing brings joy and the solemnity feel to the Mass. St. Augustine said “He who sings, prays twice.” The Mass is sung for Sunday Mass and special occasions (Christmas Mass, Easter Mass, Confirmation, Chrism Mass).

What are the rules for taking communion?

Why do you have to belong to the church to receive Eucharist?

Become Catholic if you are not already. You must be of the Catholic faith to take Communion. Accept Communion in a state of grace. The Eucharist may not be received while a person has mortal sin in their soul. If you have committed a mortal sin, such as theft, adultery, or sodomy, you must go to Reconciliation and repent before receiving Communion.

Believe in the doctrine of transubstantiation. You must believe in transubstantiation, which means that the bread and wine are actually transformed into the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Christ.

Participate in the Eucharistic fast. This means you cannot eat or drink anything for at least one hour before taking Communion. Water and medicine are excluded from the fast. Those who are elderly or ill can be excused from fasting, with the priest’s permission.

Ensure you are not under ecclesiastic censure. Those who are under ecclesiastic censure, meaning they have been excommunicated from the church or continually commit grave sins, cannot receive Communion.

If you do not belong to the Catholic Church, you do not believe in the Real Presence of our Lord in the Eucharist. If you do not believe that, but receive communion anyway, you are committing a mortal sin. One should receive Communion with proper disposition, knowledge and faith (1 Corinthians 11:26-29).

QUESTIONS ON FAITH

How was God made?

God is creator. God is Alpha and Omega. He is ever present. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be." (1 John 1-5)

Why does God lead me to go to church and why does Satan persuade me to leave God?

God doesn't want to lose anyone. The Will of God is to save all people. Satan is a fallen angel. Satan is an enemy to Saint Michael the Archangel. There is constant battle between good and evil. Satan is always at work to keep us away from God.

How do you become closer to God?

One can become closer God by having deeper relationship with Him. Spend time with God by frequenting the Sacraments, through prayer, attending Holy Mass, spending time in Adoration, listening to or reading the Bible, listening to God in silence of our heart, doing His will for your life, and doing charitable works by serving others.

Why do we have to come to church?

You are called to be Holy. God asks you to make the Day of the Lord Holy. Church is the people of God and the Body of Christ. YOU are a part of the Body of Christ. You come to Mass to sanctify yourself and to be in the presence of God.

For whatever reason, church is boring. Why?

You go to Church to be in the presence of God. Church is not an entertainment center. Participate the Holy Eucharistic celebration with all your heart and soul and Church will not be boring. Are you ready to receive the Grace of God? What is your attitude towards Mass? Mass is the prefiguration of the Heavenly banquet. We as a Child of God desire to be in His presence. If you do not like the Mass, you will not like Heaven very well.

How do we invite non-Christians to the faith OR How to explain the faith?

The Apostles Creed explains the Catholic Faith. Invite them to Mass and share your faith with them. Live your faith as an example that others want to follow. If the witness of our lives looks like the rest of the world, we have no credibility to the world. But if we live as a courageous witness to the call of Jesus Christ, people will take notice and seek what you represent.

How do we know there is a Heaven?

Sacred Scripture states so. Heaven is mentioned in the Bible over 600 times. John 14:2-4 "In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am, you also may be. Where I am going, you know the way."

Why does God allow little kids to have Cancer?

We do not know. There is sin in the world and we do suffer the consequences of sin. Sometimes God allows bad things to happen so that we can depend on Him and turn back to Him for help. To test our faith and our love for him. See **The Book of Job**

- Suffering is to awaken us to reality: Sometimes God allows suffering in order to awaken us to the fact of our sin, our impending death and judgment, our emptiness apart from God, or to help us repent and turn to God.
- Suffering is to test us: "Faith in God the Father Almighty can be put to the test by the experience of evil and suffering" (Catechism of the Catholic Church 272).
- Suffering is to discipline us, to teach us humility and trust, and to work righteousness into us.
- Suffering is to give us an opportunity to love God, to give God glory, to merit glory, and to participate in His work of redemption.

Is there a right way to pray? How do you pray?

There is no right way or wrong in prayer. In fact, God doesn't need our prayers. Prayer is for us; it is our relationship with God. Prayer is a dialogue, not a monologue. Silence is prayer. Stop and listen to God. God knows what is on your heart.

Examples of types of prayer: Vocal prayer, meditation, community prayer, family prayer, Mass, contemplation: emptying yourself before God.

Why do Catholics have so many prayers?

Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus (1Thessalonians 5:16-18). Catholics have an organized way of prayers according to the needs and circumstances. The Holy Mass is the highest form of prayer. The daily prayers (morning, afternoon, evening and night) are from the psalms from the Bible. The prayers are to guide us closer to God. The memorized prayers came to be because there were special occasions where the prayers were needed. These prayers are helpful to meditate on and to give us the words to pray when we do not know what to pray. You do not have to pray specific memorized prayers, however, these prayers may be helpful when praying for specific intentions. People learn to address their needs through the occasions which call for prayer. The prayers all have a specific purpose. Occasional prayers are for special occasions. Intentional prayers – for specific intentions. Divine Mercy – seeking God's mercy. Rosary – meditating on the mysteries and the life of Jesus. St. Francis of Assisi – prayer for peace. Prayer to St. Michael- To fend off the Devil.

QUESTIONS ON THE CATHOLIC FAITH

We would like to know how we can teach others about the Catholic religion. How can we help them in becoming Catholic?

Our Tri-Parish is working to create opportunities for Catholics to learn more about their faith. You can start a Bible study, or attend Koinonia renewal. Listen to Catholic Radio 95.9FM; subscribe to Catholic Answers.com, dig into the vast amount of books concerning Catholic "apologetics;" that is, defending the faith.

We would like to learn more about Purgatory.

Purgatory is only for the saved. It's a place or state where those who died in God's friendship are made perfect so they can enter heaven, of which St. John writes "Nothing unclean will enter it." Revelation 21:27. Also, Matthew 12:32, 1 Peter 3:19-20, 1 Corinthians 3:15, Luke 12:59, 2 Maccabees 12:44-46, Hebrews 12:14

A better understanding of what being Catholic means.

The Greek roots of the term "Catholic" mean "according to (kata-) the whole (holos)," or more colloquially, "universal." At the beginning of the second century, we find in the letters of Ignatius the first surviving use of the term "Catholic" in reference to the Church. At that time, or shortly thereafter, it was used to refer to a single, visible communion, separate from others.

The word catholic literally means "universal," as in "the universal church." It originally was applied to all Christians because we are all part of the universal church in the way that we are all members of the Body of Christ. The Latin word is catholicus, and in Greek it is katholikos, from the Greek phrase meaning "on the whole, according to the whole or in general."

Why do the Bishop, Priest, Deacon lay down in front of the altar?

At Good Friday Mass and Ordinations, the priests, deacon and Bishop will lay down in totally surrendering themselves to God in reverence.

What is the Sacred Chrism made out of?

The Bishop may actually make the chrism by pouring balsam into olive oil. The bishop leads a prayer over the oil. Then the Bishop blesses the chrism, saying a special prayer of consecration. Only the bishop can consecrate the Sacred Chrism. Sacred chrism (sacrum chrisma in Latin) is used in the celebrations of baptism, confirmation, and holy orders. Sacred chrism is also used to anoint the altar and walls of a church building.

What are the duties and responsibilities of a Permanent Deacon? He can and cannot...

Permanent deacons are men ordained to an office in the Catholic Church who normally have no intention or desire of becoming priests. He can be single or married. If the latter, he must be married before being ordained a deacon. If his wife dies before him, he may be ordained a priest if the bishop permits and approves.

Permanent deacons, especially those who are married, have secular jobs to support their families and also help the local pastor by visiting the sick, teaching the faith, counseling couples and individuals, working on parish committees and councils, and giving advice to the pastor.

Deacons can baptize, witness marriages, perform funeral and burial services outside of Mass, distribute Holy Communion, preach the homily (which is the sermon given after the Gospel at Mass), and are obligated to pray the Divine Office (Breviary) each day. (The Divine Office, Breviary, or Liturgy of the Hours are all the same thing.

Deacon cannot consecrate the Holy Eucharist nor hear confessions.

How are other churches named, for example St. John's?

The guideline regarding the naming of Catholic Churches is found in the liturgical book called the Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar (1989). This document is administered in conjunction with Catholic Canon Laws # 1217 & 1218.

The chosen name of a Church must be:

- the name of the Trinity, or
- a name for Christ, invoked in the liturgy, or a mystery of his life, or
- the name of the Holy Spirit, or
- a name for Mary, invoked under a title for her used in the liturgy, or
- the name of a holy angel, or
- the name of a canonized saint, as it appears in the Roman martyrology (or appendix), or
- the name of a blessed provided the Apostolic See has given its permission.

The aforementioned guide also made reference to merging Churches. If several parishes are merged into one, the names of the churches from the former parishes are retained and the newly merged parish, for pastoral reasons, can adopt a name different from the names of the churches it will inherit.

For example, if Saint Andrew and Saint Paul are merging into a new parish, the Bishop may decide to give a new name such as Saint Thomas to the new parish/Church. That way, everybody is starting anew in the new birth of a Church/parish.

People in the new church request names, but the Diocesan Bishop must approve the name.

How many Saints are there?

We are all called to be Saints. We do not know the official number of Saints that have been Canonized by the Catholic Church, as there are numerous in the process of Sainthood. All martyrs, who died for their faith, are granted instant Sainthood. Anyone in Heaven is a Saint.

Why are we having other churches in Carrollton/Eldred talk bad about us? Why is there such a big division between the Baptist and Catholic religion that causes them to speak poorly of our faith?

Lack of knowledge and understanding of one another. It is ignorance.

Examination of Conscience

1. I am the Lord your God; you shall not have strange gods before me.

Did I fail to love God? Have I failed to pray daily? Have I doubted or denied my faith? Was I careless in saying my prayers? Have I read books or watched TV shows or movies against the Catholic Faith? Did I follow the “rules of Lent for my age?

2. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

Did I curse or swear? Did I use God’s name in vain- lightly, carelessly or by blasphemy? Do I use profane language? Have I insulted a sacred person? Have I always used God’s name with love and respect?

3. Remember to keep holy the Lord’s Day.

Have I missed Mass through my own fault? Have I attended Mass on Sundays and Holy Days? Was I late for Mass or did I leave early? Was I easily distracted during Mass? Did I pray and sing during Mass?

4. Honor thy father and mother.

Have I always obeyed my parents promptly and cheerfully? Did I respect others in lawful authority? Have I talked back? Have I failed to help at home? Have I had a bad attitude? Have I failed to spend time with my family?

5. Thou shalt not kill.

Was I angry or resentful? Did I keep anger in my heart? Did I abuse alcohol or use drugs? Did I fight? Did I give a bad example by something I did or said? Did I fail to correct others in a kind manner? Do I show respect for my body?

6. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Did I willfully entertain impure thoughts and desires? Was I impure in my actions by myself or with another? Was I immodest in dress or behavior? Did I read impure books or magazines? Have I allowed myself to listen to impure music or watch impure TV shows or movies? Did I tell impure stories or listen to them? Do I avoid laziness, gluttony, idleness and occasions of impurity?

7. Thou shalt not steal.

Did I steal? Did I return it or make equal restitution? Did I waste time at work, in school, or at home? Did I cheat on any tests or homework? Do I try to give money or my time/talents to the Church or a Catholic charity? Have I promptly paid people what I owed them?

8. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

Have I lied, gossiped or talked behind another’s back? Do I always tell the truth? Am I sincere? Did I reveal secrets that should have been kept secret? Am I critical, negative or unkind in my talk?

9. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife.

Have I allowed myself to have impure thoughts? Have I caused impure thoughts by staring, bad reading, curiosity or impure conversations? Do I neglect to control my imagination? Do I pray at once to banish bad thoughts and temptations?

10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods.

Am I jealous of what another has? Am I moody or gloomy? Do I work, study and keep busy to counter idle thoughts? Is my heart set on earthly possessions or on the true treasures of heaven?

Reconciliation

1. Pray and think about your sins before you go to talk to the Priest. This is called an "Examination of Conscience". (See other side)
2. The Priest welcomes you. Make the sign of the cross. Say: "Bless me Father for I have sinned, it has been _____ (how long) since my last confession."
3. Tell the Priest your sins.
4. The Priest will talk with you and suggest a penance (prayers or loving actions).
5. Pray the Act of Contrition, a heartfelt sorrow of your sins.
6. The Priest will say a prayer of Absolution over you and forgive your sins in the name of Jesus.
7. Say "Amen" at the end and go sit quietly to say your penance prayers.

Act of Contrition

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee,
And I detest all my sins because of thy just punishments,
But most of all because they offend Thee, my God,
Who art all good and deserving of all my love.
I firmly resolve with the help of thy grace
to sin no more and to avoid the near occasion of sin.
Amen.