

June 22, 2020

Guidelines for the Celebration of the Conferral of the Sacrament of Confirmation During the Time of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

On April 24, 2020, Bishop Jaime Soto sent a letter to all the priests of the Diocese of Sacramento providing instructions for the celebration of the Sacraments during this time of the COVID-19 Pandemic, so as to ensure the health and safety of the faithful and clergy. He instructed the Pastors and Parochial Administrators, "Confirmation of young people and adults will be postponed to the Fall. I will delegate pastors to confer the Sacrament to the young people and adults of their parish. Pastors should advise the Bishop's office of the proposed date for the Confirmation of youth and young adults so that the proper delegation can be provided." Thus, these guidelines are provided for pastors/ parochial administrators in order to plan for the conferral of the Sacrament of Confirmation to young people and adults.

A. General Principles

1. The Guidelines for the Resumption of the Public Celebration of Masses issued on May 26, 2020 applies to the celebration of the Order of Confirmation within Mass. In cases where the Pastor/Parochial Administrator opts for the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation without the Mass, the same general principles apply.
2. Proper instructions must be provided to the candidates of the Sacrament of Confirmation, their parents, and their sponsors regarding the health and safety protocols that are in place.
3. Rehearsals for the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation should be omitted. A short instruction may take place at an appropriate time right before the celebration. It is recommended that a comprehensive plan of actions for the celebration should be sent ahead of time to all those participating in the celebration.

B. Preparing for the Celebration

1. Place of Celebration

- a. Keep in mind the current standard to determine the number of people allowed to be present in church: the lower of 25% capacity of the building or no more than 100 congregants. If necessary and based on the number of candidates, allow for several dates to celebrate the Order of Confirmation (Guidelines for Mass B.1.a).
- b. When possible, pastors should provide live-streaming services of the celebration of the Order of Confirmation. This will offer a helpful alternative and facilitate limiting the number of in-person congregants.

2. The Presider/Concelebrants/Deacons

- a. Pastors and Parochial Administrators must advise the Bishop's office of the dates when the Sacrament of Confirmation will be celebrated and secure the proper delegation. (CIC 1983 c. 882 – 884, Bishop Soto's Letter to the Priests, April 24, 2020).

- b. The Priest(s) who will be conferring the Sacrament of Confirmation should not be over 65 or have an underlying condition. Pastors and Parochial Administrators should contact the Bishop's office to make proper arrangements for supply priest(s).
- c. The presider is to follow the health and safety guidelines enumerated in the guidelines for the celebration of the Mass. The same applies to concelebrants and deacons present during the celebration (Guidelines for Mass and Addendum Guidelines for Mass).

3. Confirmation Candidates and Sponsors

- a. The Candidates and Sponsors are to wear masks during the entire celebration of the Rite.
- b. Physical distancing must be observed at all times during the celebration. Pastors/Parochial Administrators are to properly plan for the seating arrangements of candidates and sponsors. If a sponsor falls under the vulnerable category, a proxy may take their place.
 - a. Proper alternative arrangements are to be made for the conferral of the Sacrament of Confirmation to the candidates who are unable to participate due to health.
- c. Seating should be arranged in a way that ensures the appropriate physical distancing between households. Some suggestions are:
 - a. Candidate and Sponsor are seated separately. They come together in the aisle to approach the priest for the anointing during the Rite of Confirmation.
 - b. In the case where candidates are seated with their family household and the sponsor is not a member of the candidate's household, select a proxy from the candidate's household who could then sit with the candidate to represent the sponsor. The above are examples intended to guide the pastor. Pastoral prudence may provide other alternatives to ensure appropriate distancing.

4. Other Family Members and Guests

- a. If any of the immediate family and other guests fall in the vulnerable category or may exhibit a symptom(s) of the COVID-19 virus they should stay home.
- b. Other family and guests are to observe physical distancing and wear a mask during the entire ceremony.

C. The Order for the Conferral of Confirmation within the Mass

1. Introductory Rite

- a. The customary procession of candidates and sponsors should be omitted. Candidates and their sponsors should be in their designated seats. They are to stand when the presider and ministers process into the Church. Maintain physical distancing.
- b. The presider is to process in according to the guidelines for Mass. (see guidelines for the Mass D.1.)

2. The Liturgy of the Word

- a. The presider may use the readings of the day or suggested readings for the conferral of the Sacrament of Confirmation. If Confirmation is conferred on a Sunday, Solemnity or Vigil Liturgy, the proper readings for the day are used. A very brief homily should be delivered.
- b. During the Presentation of Candidates for Confirmation, the calling of the names of candidates is to be omitted.

3. The Renewal of Baptismal Promises

- a. The Candidates are to remain in their designated places.

4. The Laying of Hands

- a. The presider is to extend his hands over all the candidates for the laying of hands and saying the prescribed prayer.
- b. If Confirmation is conferred on a Sunday, a Solemnity or the Vigil Liturgy, the candidates should remain standing for the Laying of Hands. All other days, the candidates should kneel.
- c. The individual laying of hands is to be omitted.

5. The Anointing with Chrism

- a. The vessel for the Sacred Chrism must be sanitized properly before use. Chrism should be poured into a separate vessel than the one in which the Chrism is kept. The parish supply of Chrism should be kept clean as possible.
- b. The Priest(s) is to sanitize his hands prior the anointing with Chrism.
- c. A cotton swab is to be used to anoint each candidate with the sacred Chrism on their forehead. The cotton swab must not be reused on another candidate and must be properly disposed. The Priest should use sanitizer as often as needed. Any leftover Chrism from the ceremony should be properly disposed. It should not be returned to the vessel of Chrism.
- d. In accord with the Order of Confirmation n. 26, the candidate and their sponsors may approach the priest(s) while maintaining physical distance from the other candidates and sponsors. If appropriate, the presider may instead approach each candidate and their sponsors for the anointing with Chrism.
- e. The Priest(s) is to wear a mask during the anointing with Chrism.
- f. The presider is to lead the Universal Prayer. If there is a deacon present, he should read the intercessions. In the absence of a deacon, the presider or the lector may read the intercessions.

6. The Liturgy of the Eucharist

- a. If the Order of Confirmation is to be celebrated within the Mass, refer to the Guidelines for the Resumption of the Public Celebration of the Mass.
- b. The offertory procession, in accordance with the Guidelines for the Resumption of the Public Celebration of Mass, is omitted.
- c. The candidates, their sponsors, and others present at the celebration receive only the Body of Christ during Communion.

7. The Final Blessing and Dismissal

- a. The presider confers the final blessing in the customary way.

- b. The presider is to recess as prescribed in the Guidelines for Mass (D.6.) and the candidates and sponsors should not process out.

D. The Order for the Conferral of Confirmation Without Mass

1. The same guidelines apply in the conferral of the Confirmation within Mass.
2. At the recitation of the of the Lord's Prayer, congregants are not to hold hands

E. Other Considerations

1. If pictures are requested by the confirmation candidate and their families, it should be taken only with the candidate and their sponsor in a planned and orderly manner so as to observe physical distancing at all times. Group pictures should not be taken.
2. Gatherings before and after the celebration of Confirmation should be avoided until further notice.