



YOUTH MINISTRY & CONFIRMATION POLICY

There are always a lot of questions about the Youth Ministry Program and the Confirmation Program and how they relate. The following policy is how we do it at Church of the Nativity. This policy was approved by our pastor, Fr. Gus, on August 3, 2023 and updates the previous policy to follow the Diocesan policy change that Catholic high school students must now also attend the Sunday Night Youth Ministry Program for 2 years to meet the 2 Year Prior Catechesis requirement for Confirmation eligibility. Youth Ministry and Confirmation Policies differ from parish to parish within the Diocese of San Diego as well as in other dioceses so you may notice some differences with other parish's Confirmation Policies.

A. YOUTH MINISTRY PROGRAM COMPONENTS

The Nativity Youth Ministry Program involves these 4 components and is based on A Vision of Youth Ministry, Renewing the Vision, and Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops).

1. Educational/Catechesis

This is accomplished mainly through our Sunday Topic Nights from September to June. Sunday Topic Nights are about ongoing Faith Formation and challenging teens to apply and live all aspects of their faith in everyday life. Some people incorrectly refer to our Sunday Topic Nights as "Confirmation Class". Sunday Topic Nights are not about Confirmation. However, attending our Sunday Topic Nights for 2 years provides teens with the faith formation background to become eligible for the additional Confirmation Immediate Preparation Classes. Our Sunday Topic Night topics come from the documents listed above, our 4 year curriculum from St. Mary's Press, and our Topic Survey of the most requested topics from parents and teens at the start of each year.

2. Service Projects

There are regularly scheduled Service Projects as well as many other pop-up service projects offered to the teens during the year.

3. Social Events

We do Social Events about every other month and the teens vote on what to do.

4. Confirmation Immediate Preparation

The Confirmation Immediate Preparation Program runs from February through May every year. The "Confirmation Immediate Preparation Class" is specifically and only education on the Sacrament of Confirmation for eligible sophomores, juniors, or seniors and is in addition to our Sunday Topic Nights. It involves classes, a Retreat, small homework assignments, and successfully completing a Final Interview. Confirmation is only 1 part along a teen's Faith Formation journey within the Nativity Youth Ministry Program, not the end or "graduation" from Faith Formation. It is important to remember Confirmation's place in the bigger picture of overall Youth Ministry. Teens are expected to continue with their Youth Ministry involvement after Confirmation as part of their lifelong education in our Catholic faith and to live out their Confirmation commitments.

“There is more to parish youth ministry than preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation and it's celebration which is only one component or part of the total process of catechesis and faith development for adolescents”. (Diocesan Policy #310)

B. CONFIRMATION ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

In order to be eligible to enter the Nativity “Confirmation Immediate Preparation” a teen has to meet the following 3 eligibility requirements from this Nativity Confirmation Policy by mid-January of their sophomore, junior, or senior year. Once eligible, the additional Confirmation Immediate Preparation Classes and Retreat provide an opportunity for the teen to meet the remaining Confirmation requirements.

1. BAPTISM AND THE STATE OF GRACE

2. MINIMUM AGE 15 + (A HIGH SCHOOL SOPHOMORE, JUNIOR, OR SENIOR)

6. MINIMUM OF TWO YEARS PRIOR CATECHESIS/RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION AT THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL AT CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY YOUTH MINISTRY PROGRAM

C. FULL NATIVITY CONFIRMATION POLICY

There is a Diocesan Confirmation Policy that all parishes follow and then each parish may add additional terms to the Diocesan Confirmation Policy at its discretion. Here is the full Nativity Confirmation Policy, which includes the Diocesan Confirmation Policy requirements also. These are all the requirements that a teen needs to meet in order to be Confirmed at Nativity.

1. BAPTISM AND THE STATE OF GRACE – (Diocesan Policy #311.1)

One must be validly baptized to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation (Canon, 889.1). In addition, if baptized persons have the use of reason, it is required that they be in the state of grace, properly instructed and able to renew their baptismal promises (Rite of Confirmation, 12).

2. MINIMUM AGE - (HIGH SCHOOL SOPHOMORE, JUNIOR, or SENIOR) – (Diocesan Policy #311.2)

Fifteen (15) is the minimum age for Confirmation in the Diocese of San Diego, except for the case of unbaptized children of catechetical age (catechumens) who should receive Confirmation when they are baptized and the case of baptized Christian children of catechetical age but not Catholic (candidates) who should receive Confirmation when they are received into the full communion of the Catholic Church.

3. FORMATION IN THE FAITH OF THE CHURCH – (Diocesan Policy #311.3)

Candidates for Confirmation are required to evidence an understanding of the Catholic faith appropriate to their age. This means that they should have integrated all their years of catechesis and acquired appreciation of what the Church teaches. As a minimum, candidates are expected to show competence in the following four areas of Christian catechesis found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

- a. *The Creed* in which the Christian mystery is the object of faith;

- b. *The Sacred Liturgy* in which the Christian mystery is celebrated and communicated in liturgical actions;
- c. *The Christian Way of Life* in which the Christian mystery is the basis for the proper formation of conscience and for living according to the moral and social teaching of the Church; and
- d. *Christian Prayer* in which the Christian mystery is the basis for prayer, the privileged expression of which is the Our Father.

4. **EXPERIENCE OF CHRISTIAN LIVING – (Diocesan Policy #311.4)** prior to Confirmation is demonstrated by:

- a. faithful participation in the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist;
- b. a commitment to ongoing human and spiritual growth and development through prayer and good works;
- c. involvement in the parish community.

5. **PROPER DISPOSITION – (Diocesan Policy #311.5)** as evidenced by:

- a. a stated personal desire to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation;
- b. willingness to witness more firmly to Christ by word and action;
- c. acceptance of the responsibility to be an active adult member of the Church, to continue to mature in faith, and to put one's faith into practice.

6. **MINIMUM OF TWO YEARS PRIOR CATECHESIS/RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION AT THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL AT CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH MINISTRY PROGRAM – (Diocesan Policy 310).**

7. **A DAY OR EVENING OF PRAYER – (Diocesan Policy #313.3)**

8. **FINAL INTERVIEW**

D. OTHER CONFIRMATION NOTES

Immediate Preparation – (Diocesan Policy #313)

After determination of "readiness" ("eligibility"), candidates are expected to participate in Immediate Short Term Preparation Classes for the Sacrament of Confirmation which should include:

1. catechesis on the Holy Spirit based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church, nos. 683-747.
2. catechesis on the Sacraments of Christian Initiation based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church:
 - Baptism (nos. 1213-1284);
 - Confirmation (nos. 1285-1321);
 - Eucharist (nos. 1322-1419).
3. a day or evening of prayer;
4. communal celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation;
5. review of the Rite of Confirmation (cf. the Guidelines for Celebration);
6. rehearsal for the celebration of Confirmation.

Sponsors – (Diocesan Policy #314)

1. As far as possible, there should be a sponsor for each of those confirmed (Rite of Confirmation, 5). It is not recommended that two or more candidates share the same sponsor.
2. To be a Confirmation sponsor, a person must:
 - a. be at least 16 years of age and sufficiently mature for this responsibility;
 - b. be a Catholic who has been confirmed, has already received first Eucharist and is leading a life in harmony with the faith and the role to be undertaken;
 - c. not be a parent of the candidate; and
 - d. not be prohibited by law from exercising the role of sponsor. [See Canon 893 with reference to Canon 874; Rite of Confirmation, 6.]

Note:

- Each candidate may have only one sponsor and the sponsor does not have to be of the same gender as the candidate.

- It is desirable that one of the baptismal godparents also be the sponsor at Confirmation. This expresses more clearly the relationship between Baptism and Confirmation and also makes the function and responsibility of the sponsor more effective. Nonetheless, the choice of a special sponsor for Confirmation is not excluded.

- Sponsors should be chosen because they will be able to be present for the scheduled celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation and available thereafter to help the newly confirmed fulfill their baptismal promises.

- If from the same parish or locality, it is recommended that sponsors, along with parents, join the candidates on their faith journey during the period of immediate preparation.

Confirmation Name – (Diocesan Policy #315)

The new rite says nothing about taking a new name at Confirmation.

Therefore, candidates may retain their baptismal name rather than take a new one. This is desirable because it manifests an understanding of the fact that Confirmation “completes the grace of Baptism.”

Nonetheless, a special Confirmation name may be taken if desired. In this case it should be the name of a saint whose life-style or virtues the candidate wishes to emulate.

Dress for the Sacrament of Confirmation – (Diocesan Policy #316)

The dress encouraged for the candidates should not give the impression of a graduation. Regular dress attire is satisfactory. However, to emphasize the relationship between Confirmation and Baptism, a white garment or robe might be used at Confirmation, just as a white robe is used to clothe newly baptized.

The practice in some places of using stoles at Confirmation seems to have risen out of a desire to provide a symbol of Confirmation. However, the distinction between the universal priesthood of all the baptized and the ministerial priesthood of the ordained is blurred when the distinctive garb of ordained ministers is used in this manner. Therefore, stoles should not be used by the newly confirmed.

Here are a couple factors that can lead to confusion regarding Confirmation:

1. Confirmation is done at different ages in different parts of the U.S. Each local Diocese sets a minimum age when a person can be Confirmed. In the Diocese of San Diego a teen has to be at least 15 to be eligible to be confirmed, so you may hear differences with Diocesan policies in other Dioceses or states. According to Canon Law, the only exceptions to this are the cases of unbaptized children of catechetical age (catechumens) who should receive Confirmation when they are baptized and the case of baptized Christian children of catechetical age but not Catholic (candidates) who should receive Confirmation when they are received into the full communion of the Catholic Church.
2. Confirmation Programs are not offered through the Catholic High Schools. Confirmation Preparation is only done through the parishes.
3. When parents from different parishes talk to each other it can become very confusing because they are comparing different parish policies. Each parish sets its own policy/requirements for Confirmation based on the framework from the Diocese.

All teens, regardless of what High School they attend, are welcome at all Youth Ministry classes and activities! Youth Ministry is not just for public high school students! In September, at the start of the year, every family on our class lists is sent a High School Youth Ministry Registration Form to invite them to continue their faith formation, verify their contact information, update our records, and assist us in tracking a teen's "readiness" and "eligibility" for Confirmation preparation.

I hope this helps to clarify this policy a little - if you have any questions about your teen's status please call me at (858)756-1911 ext. 205.

Thanks,

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