



GIFT
FROM
ON HIGH

**CONFIRMATION AND FIRST EUCHARIST
COMPLETING THE INITIATION OF BAPTIZED CHILDREN**

**DIOCESE OF PHOENIX
SACRAMENTS OF CONFIRMATION AND FIRST EUCHARIST
POLICY AND GUIDELINES 2009**

SACRAMENT POLICY & GUIDELINES

CONFIRMATION AND FIRST EUCHARIST

POLICY 4-1.2. 'Gift from on High', Confirmation and First Eucharist policy and guidelines, defines the process by which children, baptized Catholic, who have attained the age of discretion, prepare to complete their sacraments of initiation in the Diocese of Phoenix.

UNDERSTANDING CONFIRMATION AND FIRST EUCHARIST AS SACRAMENT OF INITIATION

"Christian initiation is accomplished by three sacraments together: Baptism which is the beginning of new life; Confirmation which is its strengthening; and the Eucharist which nourishes the disciple with Christ's Body and Blood for his transformation in Christ." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* [CCC] #1275.)

A BRIEF HISTORY

For the first five centuries of the Church's history, the three Sacraments of Initiation were celebrated together as part of one initiation rite. This was true for adults and children. From the fifth to the thirteenth centuries, infant Baptism became the norm. At that time Church leaders separated Confirmation and Eucharist from Baptism. Usually, Confirmation was celebrated at seven years of age, the age of discretion, while First Eucharist took place in pre-adolescence. Although separated from Baptism, the order of the Sacraments remained the same. It was not until the twentieth century, in 1910, that the age for Eucharist was lowered to the age of discretion. At that point, the norm became celebrating the reception of Eucharist around the age of seven or eight, and Confirmation sometime between eight and eighteen years of age.

The Sacrament of Confirmation makes present the same grace that was showered upon the Apostles on Pentecost, fifty days after the Resurrection of Christ. Through the celebration of Confirmation, the Father and the Son pour out the Holy Spirit, who brings seven special gifts: Wisdom, understanding, right judgment, courage, knowledge, reverence, and wonder and awe in the presence of the Lord. Each of these special gifts of the Spirit gives graces that help us to face the challenges of living in full accord with the Gospel today.

The reception of this Sacrament is an indispensable moment in the life of all Catholics, and its celebration is of importance for the Church. In the renewal of the Sacraments, mandated by the Second Vatican Council, the Church was invited to restore the celebrations of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation to their original order of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. This restored order helps us recognize that sharing in the Eucharist completes our initiation into the Church. As the norm, Confirmation preparation is to be integrated into the preparation for Eucharist. The close connection between Baptism and Confirmation is also emphasized. The Sacrament of Confirmation, prepared for and celebrated together with First Eucharist in Third Grade, initiates the baptized ever more deeply into the Christian mystery of Trinitarian life.

"Like Baptism which it completes, Confirmation is given only once, for it too imprints on the soul an indelible spiritual mark, the "character," which is the sign that Jesus Christ has marked a Christian with the seal of his Spirit by clothing him with power from on high so that he may be his witness." CCC #1304

CONFIRMATION AND THE AGE OF DISCRETION

The sacrament of confirmation is to be conferred on the faithful at about the age of discretion, unless the Bishops' Conference has decided on a different age, or there is a danger of death, or in the judgment of the minister, a grave cause suggests otherwise (Code of Canon Law 891).

All Sacraments are a gift from our Heavenly Father, who desires to give us His very life, which we call grace. Sacraments are not earned or merited. For this reason, Confirmation should not be perceived as the sacrament of adult commitment to the Church. In fact, the Church requires priests to confirm infants and children younger than the age of reason when they are in danger of death so that they may receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit. The practice of the Eastern Churches is to administer Confirmation (called 'Chrismation' in the Eastern Churches) at infancy. An authentic mature commitment to Christ and the Church is expressed in full participation in the Eucharist and apostolic life of the Church. It is not achieved at a single moment but throughout the life-long deepening of our relationship with Christ. This begins in childhood and continues until death.

Both the *Rite of Confirmation* and *Code of Canon Law (Canon 891)* set the age for Confirmation as the age of discretion. Effective July 2002, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops decreed the age for Confirmation to be between the age of discretion and age sixteen. Within that range, local bishops may determine their own diocesan policy. Consequently, those Baptized Catholics who have reached the age of discretion should receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. To be the age of discretion means that one has the ability to choose right and wrong and to be held accountable for it. The Church understands this to be around the completion of the age of seven (*Canon 11*).

Confirmation is actually the completion of Baptism (by the full gift of the Holy Spirit). The perfection of baptismal grace found in the Sacrament of Confirmation is not dependent upon age or knowledge of the Confirmation candidate. The grace that is conferred is a free gift and 'does not need ratification to become effective' (*Cf. CCC #1308*). The common practice of high school reception of Confirmation has given the impression that somehow the Sacrament is merited by virtue of age or training. Many today believe that the Sacrament of Confirmation is a 'coming of age' ritual in which the individual owns his or her faith for the first time. In truth, the Sacrament of Confirmation is an effective vehicle of grace at any age as long as it is validly conferred. Thus, those that receive the Sacrament are able to reap its benefits from the moment of reception. The graces of this Sacrament conferred at a young age are of great assistance to young people as they grow toward adolescence and young adulthood.

CCC#1306 states:

Every baptized person not yet confirmed can and should receive the sacrament of Confirmation. Since Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist form a unity, it follows that "the faithful are obliged to receive this sacrament at the appropriate time," for without Confirmation and Eucharist, Baptism is certainly valid and efficacious, but Christian initiation remains incomplete.

In his Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that all Sacraments lead to the Holy Eucharist. The Eucharist, which unites us with the life of the Trinity, is the entire goal of the sacramental system the Lord gave the Church. All of the Sacraments, including Confirmation, lead to and are fulfilled in the Eucharist. Because the Eucharist is the source and summit of the life of the Church, those children who are prepared to receive their first Holy Communion are by definition ready to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, if they have not already received it.

POLICY 4-1.2.1. ROLES FOR THOSE INVOLVED

*You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you
and you will be my witnesses. Acts 1:8*

POLICY 4-1.2.1.1: CANDIDATES

According to our Diocesan policy, the normal age for Confirmation is for baptized children in third grade (usually around the age of eight years old). This is in compliance with the universal law, which holds that a candidate for Confirmation must be at the age of discretion, seven years of age or above. Therefore a candidate for Confirmation must meet the following requirements:

- Be baptized and not previously confirmed
- Must be Catholic (children baptized in another denomination, including those baptized in so-called 'catholic' churches that are not in communion with Rome, must make a Profession of Faith prior to Confirmation)
- Must be properly instructed
- Must be capable of renewing their Baptismal promises
- Must have previously been prepared for and received the Sacrament of Reconciliation (ordinarily occurs in Second Grade)

Candidates will be prepared for the Sacrament of Confirmation and First Eucharist. Both sacraments will be celebrated in the same Sacred Liturgy.

POLICY 4-1.2.1.2: PARENTS

Parents have a right and a responsibility to be intimately involved in preparing their children for sacraments and are to be models for their children in the life of Faith. Parents discern the readiness of their children to prepare for and celebrate the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist in consultation with their pastor or his delegate.

Parents, who due to extraordinary circumstances cannot assume their role in preparation of their child for the sacraments, may designate another adult to fulfill this responsibility (*discerned in dialogue with pastor or designate*).

POLICY 4-1.2.1.3: PASTORS

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" (*Canon 843 § 2*).

POLICY 4-1.2.1.4: CATECHISTS

Catechists involved in the formal catechesis of the candidates must be in the process of fulfilling the requirements to be a *Certified* Catechist. (For certification information, contact the Department of Family Catechesis.)

POLICY 4-1.2.1.5: SPONSORS

Every candidate should have a Confirmation sponsor. Candidates may have more than one sponsor, however only one should be designated as the liturgical sponsor who presents the candidate for confirmation. It is desirable that baptismal godparents, as extensions of the spiritual family, continue this role at Confirmation. Sponsors should be actively involved in the child's life of faith before, during, and after Confirmation.

QUALIFICATIONS OF A SPONSORS

Sponsors must be at least sixteen years old. They may not be the natural or adoptive parents of the Confirmation candidate. They must be fully initiated into the Catholic Faith (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist). They must be leading a life in harmony with the Faith. They must be free of any canonical impediment (*RC 5-6; Canon 874, 892-893; CCC 1311; RCIA 10.2*).

"After baptism it is the responsibility of the parents, in their gratitude to God, whose adopted child it has become, to receive confirmation, and to participate in the Holy Eucharist. In this duty they are again to be helped by the parish priest by suitable means."

Rite of Baptism 5

In Confirmation, the baptized 'are joined more completely to the Church, they are enriched with special strength by the Holy Spirit and thus are more solemnly obliged to spread and defend the faith in word and deed as true witnesses of Christ.'

LG 11

GUIDELINES FOR THOSE INVOLVED

CANDIDATES

1. Candidates must display an openness of heart through:
 - a. Mass attendance
 - b. Consistent attendance at formation sessions
 - c. Participation in a Family *Sacraments of Initiation* Retreat
 - d. Willingness to participate in community service
2. Candidates must provide a recently issued copy of their baptismal certificate. The full address of the parish of Baptism must be attached to this certificate.

PARENTS/ADULT/FAMILY MEMBERS

1. "Participation in the life of the Church" can vary in degrees in accordance to the circumstances of each family. One must approach families with an evangelizing attitude and pastoral consideration of the faith life of the parents. Parents are to be encouraged to participate in Sunday Eucharist with their children.
2. Parents assume the responsibility to model a commitment to personal prayer, community worship and ministry expected of a mature Christian. It is the role of an adult family member to assist their child to meet the attendance and service requirements. It is vital that they pray for and with the candidate and show willingness to share their faith story.

SPONSOR

1. A sponsor should be faithful Catholic who walks with the candidate as witness and guide. Ideally they should be the candidate's godparent. This practice supports the connection between Baptism and Confirmation. They should display maturity for this role and willingness to witness faith to the candidate.
2. It is recommended that someone nearby be chosen as the sponsor. Sponsors are to support their candidate during the preparation process through prayer, words of encouragement and attendance when required and are to present the candidates to the bishop for anointing.

PASTORS AND DESIGNATED STAFF

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.

Canon 843, § 2

PARISH COMMUNITY

The parish is the pre-eminent place for catechesis (*CT 67*). Catechesis should be extended within the community of the faithful. Parishioners should strive to build a community that:

- Witnesses to Christ and demonstrates discipleship
- Lives sacramental and prayerful lives

POLICY 4-1.2.2: SACRAMENTAL FORMATION

*“When the Spirit of truth comes,
he will guide you into all the truth. . .” John 16:13*

POLICY 4-1.2.2.1: CURRICULUM AND TEXTBOOK SERIES

Textbooks used for children’s Sacramental preparation must be found on the USCCB list of textbooks in conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Updated lists are provided through the diocesan Department of Family Catechesis website at www.childrenscatechesisphx.org.

Parishes desiring to use resources not on the Textbooks in Conformity list, or parishes developing their own curriculum, must submit these materials to the Diocesan Department of Family Catechesis.

POLICY 4-1.2.2.2: LIFE OF THE CHURCH

Formation for the sacraments must be fashioned around the events of Church life, justice, prayer and spirituality.

Printed resources are not to be viewed as the sole curriculum. Taken literally, curriculum is derived from *currere* the Latin verb meaning to run. (*Consider the journey of a maturing disciple and the lifelong course to be run.*)

POLICY 4-1.2.2.3: RETREAT COMPONENT

A day or weekend retreat should be planned for parents and their children to be a time to reflect upon the Church’s teachings on Confirmation and the Eucharist in language suited to the children’s age level. A time of prayer and practice for the liturgy could be included in this retreat.

POLICY 4-1.2.2.4: SERVICE COMPONENT

Service is encouraged to be part of the preparation experience as it is a visible sign of lifelong faith.

Candidates should serve in ways meaningful to them that enable them to use their talents and abilities.

Parents are to guide and nurture their candidate into a vision of lifelong service following the example of Christ.

Preparation for Confirmation should aim at leading the Christian toward a more intimate union with Christ and a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit—his actions, his gifts and his biddings—in order to be more capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities of Christian life. To this end catechesis for Confirmation should strive to awaken a sense of belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ, the universal Church as well as the parish community.”

CCC #1309

FORMATION GUIDELINES

FAMILY CENTERED FORMATION

Pastors, Catechetical Leaders and Catechists are urged to fashion programs of preparation that are family centered, helping parents to exercise their fundamental role as the primary religious educators of their children.

Families should be requested to take full and active participation in the preparation of their Confirmation candidate:

- Establishing a Daily Family Prayer Time
- Family Service Projects
- Family Retreat

Retreats for parents and their children should be opportunities for instruction and reflection on the Church's Teaching on Confirmation and Eucharist in language and methods that are age appropriate for the children. A time of prayer and practice for the liturgy should be included in these retreats.

MARKING PROGRESS THROUGH CELEBRATIONS AND BLESSING

Per their discretion, pastors should consider adding optional celebrations and blessings to the preparation period for the sacraments of Confirmation and First Eucharist to mark the stages of the faith journey. These blessings can be done with the families of the candidates and with the entire parish family. Examples of this can be found in the Book of Blessings.

TEXTBOOKS FOUND IN CONFORMITY

When a textbook is being used in the preparation process, the *United States Catholic Conference of Bishops* (USCCB) places it on a list of those to be found in conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. An updated list of approved texts can be obtained from the Diocesan Department of Family Catechesis or can be found on the internet at www.childrenscatechesisphx.org.

SELECTION OF CONFIRMATION NAME

A Confirmation candidate is strongly encouraged to be confirmed under his or her baptism name, or in accordance to the past custom of the Church, select the name of a biblical, beatified, or canonized person as recognized by the Church. If candidates decide to select a name, they should be familiar with the life of the patron of their choice and the ways in which this person was a witness to Christ and demonstrated discipleship.

CONVERSATIONS ON DISCIPLESHIP

Catechists are encouraged to hold conversations with the young candidates. This is not to be considered an evaluation to determine whether or not the children are suitable to receive Confirmation. Taking part in this conversation is essential to help a candidate appreciate his or her growing relationship with Jesus.

RECOMMENDED CATECHETICAL CONTENT for CONFIRMATION

In each of the seven sacraments the faithful enter into a vital relationship with Christ and His people. Confirmation is the sacrament by which we are incorporated into the Church, into a holy nation and a royal priesthood. With every doctrine of the Faith there are elements that are essential for understanding the teaching. Doctrine must be presented in an age-appropriate manner.

Curriculum does not replace textbooks or other catechetical resources, its aim is to focus the resources used on the more important truths for the readiness of a given age group.

<p><u>ESSENTIAL TEACHINGS:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The Holy Spirit as the Third Person of the Trinity▪ The Sacrament of Baptism where we first receive the Spirit▪ The role of the Holy Spirit in our lives and within the Church▪ The sealing with the Holy Spirit in the Sacrament of Confirmation▪ The gifts and fruits of the Spirit and how we are called to be witnesses and disciples▪ Liturgy of Confirmation- the symbols and Scripture readings about the Spirit (<i>appreciating the Liturgy of the Word as a time when God speaks to us</i>).	<p><i>“Confirmation perfects Baptismal grace; it is the sacrament which gives the Holy Spirit in order to root us more deeply in the divine filiation, incorporate us more firmly into Christ, strengthen our bond with the Church, associate us more closely with her mission, and help us bear witness to the Christian faith in words accompanied by deeds.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">CCC #1316</p>
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The full, conscious, and active participation of the faithful demands careful instruction in the ritual and its symbols. In the Restored Order, Confirmation preparation is integrated into the preparation for Eucharist.

RECOMMENDED CATECHETICAL CONTENT for FIRST EUCHARIST

The close connection between Baptism and Confirmation is emphasized, while recognizing the importance of Eucharist as the culmination of Christian Initiation.

The Eucharist is the heart and summit of the Church's life, for in it Christ associates his Church and all her members with his sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving offered once for all on the cross to his Father; by this sacrifice he pours out the graces of salvation on his Body which is the Church.

CCC #1407

"May he make us an everlasting gift to you,"

Eucharistic
Prayer III

ESSENTIAL TEACHINGS:

- Recognizing God's unconditional love for us.
- God's greatest gift to us is Jesus his Son.
- At Mass we give God thanks and praise.
- Basic understanding of the Eucharistic Liturgy as an act of worship in which the Church and all her members are associated with Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross for all.
- God speaks to us through the Liturgy of the Word.
- Real presence - The bread and wine are not merely blessed symbols, but "by the power of the Holy Spirit", the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ. Christ Himself is truly present.
- The Holy Spirit acts in our lives, and Eucharist enriches us to use our gifts in service of others.

CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT

*“In him you also, had heard the word of truth,
the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him and were marked with the seal of
the promised Holy Spirit. . .” Ephesians 1:13.*

*They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of
bread and the prayers.” Acts 2:42*

To highlight the connection between the two Sacraments, the celebration of the Sacraments of Confirmation and First Eucharist will take place at the same liturgy.

Confirmation and First Eucharist will be celebrated in both the Fall and the Spring.

POLICY 4-1.2.3.1: CELEBRANT

Confirmation will continue to be celebrated by the Bishop of the Diocese of Phoenix, by visiting Bishops, and by selected priests (vicars and deans) with delegated faculties from the Bishop of Phoenix for conferring Confirmation. First Eucharist will be celebrated in the same liturgy.

“In the Latin Rite, the ordinary minister of Confirmation is the bishop. Although the bishop may for grave reasons concede to priests the faculty of administering Confirmation, it is appropriate from the very meaning of the sacrament that he should confer it himself, mindful that the celebration of Confirmation has been temporally separated from Baptism for this reason. Bishops are the successors of the apostles. They have received the fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders. The administration of this sacrament by them demonstrates clearly that its effect is to unite those who receive it more closely to the Church, to her apostolic origins, and to her mission of bearing witness to Christ.”

CCC #1313

The Acts of the Apostles recounts Confirmation in the early Church as being administered by the Apostles (Acts 8:14-16). In continuing that tradition, the Latin Rite holds that the bishop, as a direct successor of the Apostles, is the ordinary minister of the Sacrament of Confirmation. Canon 884 § 1 states that the Bishop may designate individual priests with the faculties to confirm. In our Diocese, Bishop Olmsted has granted the faculties of Confirmation to the Vicars and Deans.

To schedule and request the necessary forms, contact the Office of the Chancery at (602) 354-2477.

POLICY 4-1.2.3.2: REGISTRATION OF CONFIRMATION AND EUCHARIST

After confirmation has been celebrated, the pastor or his designate is to record the names of those confirmed in the Confirmation Register. This information includes the minister, parents, sponsor, date and place of Confirmation (See Canon 895).

Confirmation information, of those who were baptized in your parish, must also be documented in their Baptism record. Notification is to be sent to the places of Baptism of each Confirmation candidate so proper notification can be made in their baptismal registers (*Canons 535 §2, 895*).

Note: First Eucharist information is not sent to the church where baptism took place. This information need only be recorded only at the parish where the Celebration of First Eucharist takes place.

All-powerful God,
Father of our
Lord Jesus Christ,
by water and the
Holy Spirit you
freed your sons
and daughters
from sin and
gave them new
life. Send your
Holy Spirit upon
them to be their
helper and guide.
Give them the
spirit of wisdom
and
understanding,
the spirit of right
judgment and
courage, the
spirit of
knowledge and
reverence. Fill
them with the
spirit of wonder
and awe in your
presence.

We ask this
through
Christ our Lord.

Rite of Confirmation

MYSTAGOGY: A LIFELONG PROCESS

The Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, are the rites by which we become members of the Body of Christ taking our place in full communion with the Church. Candidates, when preparing for the sacraments, spend time in prayer and study. Yet, it is in embracing the life-long journey into conversion that we truly become faithful disciples of Jesus.

It is important to realize how significant Confirmation and First Eucharist are to our faith journey and conversion. If we attempt to live our lives as Catholic followers of Jesus with the understanding of a 3rd grader, or a 6th grader, or a sophomore in high school, we are not truly living up to the call of Jesus to be His disciple. His call is life-long, and we need to update ourselves continuously and foster within our families, and within ourselves as individuals, a deeper understanding and appreciation of our faith.

Mystagogy is what the Church refers to when we are challenged to continuously “grow in deepening our grasp of the paschal mystery and in making it a part of our lives through meditation on the Gospel, sharing in the Eucharist, and doing the works of charity” (*Rite of Christian Initiation* #244). It is a lifelong introduction into a fuller and more effective understanding of mysteries through the Gospel message we have learned and above all through our experience of the sacraments we have received. As we grow and mature, we are called to “derive a new perception of the faith, of the Church, and of the world” (*Rite of Christian Initiation* #245).

Throughout the period of preparation for the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist, the pastor and catechetical leaders are to call the attention of the parents and the candidates to the need for Mystagogy – the need for on-going education and experience of our Catholic faith following reception of the Sacraments. Indeed, it would be a sign that a family is not ready for the experience of initiation if the intention is to neglect Mystagogy as their children grow and mature.

Mystagogy is a new word for many, but an important concept for our families. To become a domestic Church, parents need not only to seek preparation of their children for sacramental experiences, but to be committed to:

- On-going education and formation for their family;
- Participating fully, actively, and consciously in the Mass;
- Participating in the life and ministry of their parish community;
- Participating often in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

This gradual living through the mystery of God’s love for us and discerning and committing ourselves to our role in the salvation story is something that comes to pass as we mature in Christ. This is the mystagogy of our lives. It is important to acknowledge and articulate that reception of the Sacraments of Initiation is not the end of our formation as Christians. It is but the beginning.

It is crucial that parishes continually offer opportunities for ongoing education and formation for all ages and stages of life to help the initiated come to a fuller understanding and appreciation of the gifts they have received, gifts from on high.

GUIDELINES FOR SPECIAL SITUATIONS

SITUATIONS OF HOME SCHOOLING

Mindful of parents' privilege as the primary educators of their children in the ways of faith, we also recognize that the sacraments are properly to be celebrated within the context of the parish community. The rights and responsibilities of parents and parishes alike in this endeavor calls for a true partnership between the two.

Whether their children attend a parish religious education program, a Catholic school, or are instructed at home, parents are required to participate actively in preparing their children to receive the sacraments, especially Reconciliation, Confirmation and Eucharist. This includes participation in the parish sacramental preparation programs and sacramental celebrations. In light of the entire process for catechesis to include the four components of knowledge, community, service and worship, home schooling alone cannot replace catechesis or sacramental preparation in the parish church (*GCD #17; NCD #32; CT #202-26*).

The parish must continue to be the preeminent place for catechesis (*CT #67*). "In a special way the parish priest or his delegate is to ensure, in accordance with the norms laid down by the diocesan Bishop that: an adequate catechesis is given for the celebration of the sacraments; children are properly prepared for First Confession, the Sacrament of Confirmation, and First Holy Communion by means of catechetical formation over an appropriate period of time; children after they have made their First Holy Communion, are given a richer and deeper catechetical formation" (*Canon 777 §1.2.3*).

1. Materials must be on the approved list provided by the Division of Education and Evangelization. The preferred text will be the one used in the parish religious education program or the parish elementary school program. The pastor or parish life coordinator will approve the home program and text(s).
2. The home schoolers will follow the Religion Curriculum Guidelines for the Diocese of Phoenix.
3. Pastor, or designate will meet periodically with the home schoolers to review the progress of the program.
4. Reception of the Sacraments of Initiation and Reconciliation will be celebrated in family's parish of registration.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Parents, those who care for persons with disabilities and pastors are to ensure that those faithful who have been baptized are properly instructed to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation at the appropriate time. All baptized Catholics who have not been confirmed and who possess the use of reason may receive the Sacrament of Confirmation if they have been suitably instructed, are properly disposed and able to renew their baptismal promises. In circumstances where an individual may never attain the age of reason, they are encouraged either directly or through their parents or guardian to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation at the appropriate time. In such a case, suitable instruction appropriate to the developmental need of the individual(s) shall take place. This instruction shall be directed to the celebration of the Sacrament.

Parents, guardians or pastors are to ensure that persons with special needs, who have reached the age of reason, are correctly prepared and are nourished by Eucharist as early as possible. The criterion for reception of First Eucharist is the same for persons with cognitive or developmental disabilities as for all others preparing to receive. The individual must be able to distinguish the Body of Christ from typical or ordinary food. This recognition can be evidenced through manner, gesture or reverential silence rather than verbal.

Pastors and their delegates in Sacramental preparation are to consult with the appropriate diocesan offices regarding decisions that will make exemptions to the stated diocesan policy. Cases of doubt should be resolved in favor of the right of the baptized person to receive the sacrament. The existence of a disability does not disqualify an individual from receiving the Eucharist.

PARENTS/SPONSORS IN MILITARY OR DISTANT

See policy 4-1.2.2, second paragraph addressing when a parent is unable to participate. If a sponsor is unable to participate in the preparation of the candidate or attend the liturgical reception, a proxy may be appointed.

CANDIDATES OF PARENTS WHO ARE INCARCERATED

Incarcerated parents of children preparing for the Sacraments of Confirmation and First Eucharist, should be offered an opportunity to be involved in the preparation of their children insofar as is possible.

PREPARATION OF UNBAPTIZED CHILDREN

Parents who have unbaptized children younger than the age of discretion are to enroll in a parish infant baptism preparation process per *'Entering New Waters of Baptism', the Diocese of Phoenix Infant Baptism Policy and Guidelines*. Unbaptized children who have attained the age of discretion are to prepare for and receive the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and First Eucharist per the directives outlined in the *Code of Canon Law 866* and *RCIA #252ff*. Formation for the initiation of children can be accomplished in a variety of ways in the Parish, such as 1) A Parish Religious Education program; 2) A children's catechumenate program; or 3) Through a Family-Based catechumenate program in which the entire family is catechized and initiated together. A general principle of children's initiation is the children should be mainstreamed into religious education programs as quickly as possible upon the completion of the Sacraments of Initiation.

PARENTS, THE PRIMARY EDUCATORS

CONSIDER THE DOMESTIC CHURCH

Pastors and catechetical staffs are urged to fashion a process that not only is *family friendly*, but family centered! In implementing this revised policy, seize this opportunity to come to the aide of families. This is one more opportunity to help strengthen our homes as *domestic churches*.

Education in the faith by the parents should begin in the child's earliest years. This already happens when family members help one another grow in faith by the witness of a Christian life in keeping with the Gospel. Family catechesis precedes, accompanies, and enriches other forms of instructions. Parents have the mission of teaching their children to pray and to discover their vocation as children of God (CCC #2226).

Pope John Paul II continually encouraged the renewal of the *domestic church*.

By virtue of their ministry of educating, parents are through the witness of their lives the first heralds of the gospel for their children. Furthermore, by praying with their children, by reading the word of God with them and by introducing them...into the Body of Christ—both the eucharistic and the ecclesial body—they become fully parents, in that they are begetters not only of bodily life, but also of the life that through the Spirit's renewal flows from the cross and resurrection of Christ (*Familiaris Consortio*, #39).

Consider an intergenerational component to your children's catechesis, one that would serve a family with children of varied ages and even a parent in that family requesting the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist. We are encouraged that the model for all catechesis is that of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA).

CONFIRMATION OPPORTUNITY FOR PARENTS

Many parents have not completed their Sacraments of Initiation. Parishes offering a family model could offer parents time for spiritual growth and renewal and an opportunity for them to complete their sacramental initiation through the Sacrament of Confirmation. Parents are tasked with guiding the spiritual journey of their children. Faced with the values of today's society, this responsibility can seem overwhelming. An intergenerational approach to formation could enliven parishes with opportunities for parents to renew their faith.

"Living in such a world, under the pressures coming above all from the mass media, the faithful do not always remain immune from the obscuring of certain fundamental values, nor set themselves up as the critical conscience of the family culture and as active agents in the building of an authentic family humanism." (*Familiaris Consortio* #7).

"It is necessary to go back to seeing the family as the *sanctuary of life*. The family is indeed sacred: It is the place in which life—the gift of God—can be properly welcomed and protected against the many attacks to which it is exposed, and can develop in accordance with what constitutes authentic human growth. In the face of the so-called culture of death, the family is the heart of the culture of life" (*Centesimus Annus* #39).

ADULTS SEEKING THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

For a comprehensive understanding of Adult Confirmation, please consult the Diocese of Phoenix "Guidelines for Preparing and Celebrating Confirmation with Adults" May 2005.

DOCUMENTS ABBREVIATIONS

CCC Catechism of the Catholic Church

CT Catechesi Tradendae

GDC General Directory for Catechesis

LG Lumen Gentium

NDC National Directory for Catechesis

RC Rite of Confirmation

RCIA Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults