

Confirmation

This is a brief introduction to the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation in the Parish of St Michael in Huntingdon. There will be a Confirmation Programme beginning in January 2019, please look for the details in the newsletter in November 2018 to sign up to attend the course. The following questions will be answered.

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What is Confirmation about?

*Confirmation brings an increase and deepening of baptismal grace.
It roots us more deeply in the divine filiation which makes us cry, "Abba! Father!";
It unites us more firmly to Christ; it increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us;
It renders our bond with the Church more perfect;
It 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.* (Catechism of the Catholic Church)

Confirmation is thus closely linked with Baptism. The one distinctive aspect of the four characteristics mentioned above is the last. Confirmation makes us witnesses of Christ. One way of looking at it is to say that baptism transforms us, making us a new creation. Confirmation makes that public, so that we, in the power of the Spirit, might transform the world.

In the early church Confirmation was administered at the same time as Baptism, usually by the Bishop and usually to adults. With the growth of infant baptism the priest would baptise the infant, and that baptism would be confirmed by the Bishop when he next visited. Our current practice has grown out of this. By having the Bishop administer Confirmation we are reminded of our connection with the wider church.

When are young people normally confirmed?

In the diocese of East Anglia the normal minimum age for Confirmation is school year 10 (14/15 years old). This is seen as an appropriate age for the young people to take on responsibility for their own Catholic faith and to accept the responsibility of being witnesses to Christ. However it is the young people themselves who make a choice. Family and parish have a duty to encourage and support them, but the decision must be theirs.

How is the Confirmation of young people organized in East Anglia?

Young people are confirmed at time convenient to the bishop, in a small parish like this, perhaps every three years. Prior to this they participate in a preparation course which begins in the previous autumn. Full participation in the course is essential.

The course is designed to help the candidates reflect on the meaning of their Catholic faith for their lives and how their faith affects their moral decisions and life choices. They will also explore how the power of the Holy Spirit can transform their lives as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Details of the course and application are published annually. The candidates meet regularly throughout the year.

Is Confirmation necessary for Marriage in the Catholic Church?

Not in England and Wales. The Church strongly recommends that those to be married should be confirmed. However the Church also states that Confirmation should be chosen in its own right, and not merely as a preparation for another sacrament. However in some countries, e.g. Italy, Poland etc Confirmation is normally required before being married in a Catholic Church.

It is also necessary for you to be confirmed to act as a godparent at a Catholic Baptism.

How does an adult go about seeking Confirmation?

If you are a regular worshipper in the parish but for some reason 'missed the boat' when you were younger and have yet to be confirmed, we would encourage you to seek this important sacrament. You may also be planning to get married in a country which requires you to be confirmed first. In either of these cases you need to approach the parish team about adult confirmation.

Adults seeking Confirmation normally join the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). This is an open process, meeting regularly to discuss aspects of the Catholic faith with parishioners and others who are seeking to be baptised or to join the Church. Please speak to the parish clergy. Anybody seeking to become a Catholic who has been baptised in another denomination will usually need to be Confirmed again when they are received.

To enquire further about adult Confirmation should contact the parish priest. We have an RCIA Programme at the moment, it meets on Friday evenings at 19.00 in the Good Shepherd Room, please check the newsletter for up to date details for each meeting.