

Introduction

Who will use this book?

This book is for the priests who will lead the celebration of Confirmation and the other liturgies that accompany this sacrament, as well as for the teachers and parish representatives who will be involved in preparing the children and the church building for the different celebrations.

Share the Good News: National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland outlines how, in preparing baptised children effectively to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation, there are three partners: the home, the parish and the school. In light of this, the book contains preparatory notes and liturgy preparation sheets, which may be completed at a meeting attended by representatives of the home, school and parish communities, in so far as that is possible, in consultation with the priest(s) who will lead the celebrations.

Celebrating Confirmation within and outside of Mass

There are many reasons why Sunday Mass is the most appropriate setting for the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation. Foremost among these is that the Mass setting allows candidates to be initiated into their own community of faith in the presence of their faith community. If the children are being confirmed during Sunday Mass, it is important to consult with the parish about the usual preparations for the Mass, including the music to be used during the ceremony. There are some music suggestions from the *Grow in Love* programme in these resources, and the settings for these, without accompaniments, are also provided.

In circumstances where it is not feasible for the Confirmation ceremony to take place during Sunday Mass, it can take place outside of Mass, for example at an evening event in the church, which families can attend. Both options are given in the book, so that parishes can make a plan to suit their own needs.

How will the children prepare for these ceremonies?

The Religious Education programme for primary schools, *Grow in Love* (Veritas), supports the implementation of the *Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland* (2015). In *Grow in Love*, the thrust is towards catechesis on the sacraments, which is spread out over the year in which the child celebrates the sacrament. The *Grow in Love* Religious Education programme focuses on the Sacrament of Confirmation in both the Fifth Class/P7 programme and the Sixth Class programme.

Children need to be helped to understand the significance of the ceremonies in which they are to participate. The teacher can facilitate this by showing the children the outline of the ceremony and explaining the elements, perhaps using the planning sheets as a guide. Children may also be invited to compose the Prayer of the Faithful, with help from teachers or parents/guardians.

At the ceremonies themselves, the children may lead the Prayer of the Faithful and take part in the Offertory Procession. (At the Confirmation ceremony, an Opening Procession may also be included.) One or perhaps two rehearsals at the church are necessary to assign the children's seats and to practise the anointing with the oil of chrism.

The Rite of Confirmation

A new translation of the Rite of Confirmation has been prepared by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL). This new translation has not yet been adopted by the Irish Episcopal Conference for use in Ireland, so in this book and in *Grow in Love* we continue to refer to the 1978 translation of the Rite, as currently in use.

The Confirmation Pledge

Traditionally, candidates for Confirmation have been given the opportunity to promise to abstain from alcohol and illegal drugs as part of their preparation for the sacrament. This is linked with the fact that they are to be given the fullness of the Holy Spirit, and strengthened to make good decisions. An opportunity to take a pledge abstaining from alcohol and illegal drugs is offered as part of the liturgy in which the Service of Light is celebrated. In recent years, this liturgy has been deemed an appropriate setting in which to do so. The pledge may, however, also be taken as part of the Confirmation ceremony, graduation ceremony or on another occasion such as Temperance Sunday.

Candidates may choose to abstain from alcohol until an age of their choosing, or until they are eighteen, or for life. This decision should be made in consultation with their parents/guardians. Part of the pledge also includes a promise to abstain from harmful drugs for life, and to help others to do the same. Children should be given the opportunity to discuss the pledge in depth as part of SPHE, and it should be sent home well in advance for consultation with parents/guardians. Both children and the parent(s)/guardian(s) sign the pledge. Young people may also be offered the opportunity to become members of the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association, either on a temporary basis or for life.

Sacrament of Reconciliation

As the children have promised to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation in preparation for Confirmation, an opportunity to do so may be offered at the end of the liturgy in which the Service of Light is celebrated, where it is deemed appropriate, and where sufficient priests are available. Parents/guardians and other family members may also be offered the opportunity to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation.