

Parish of

**Service of Reflection and Preparation
for the Celebration of
the Sacrament of Confirmation**



Diocese of Galway, Kilmacduagh and Kilfenora

GUIDANCE ON THE SERVICE OF PRAYER AND REFLECTION

- Ideally, this service should take place soon after the candidates have enrolled with their parishes for the sacrament of Confirmation.
- The ceremony is intended as a time of reflective preparation for parents, family members, sponsors and the candidates themselves. If the sponsor cannot attend, someone should be selected from the family to stand in for them at this ceremony.
- The ceremony should take place in the local parish church or some other suitable church.
- The ceremony is designed to be led by a priest or layperson.
- The reflection after the Gospel could be delivered by the priest, a teacher, parent, or guest who has experience and expertise in the area.
- The focus throughout should be on creating a space for personal reflection. It should not be rushed and silent periods should be observed as indicated.
- As many people as possible should be encouraged to take part in the symbolic actions and in the various parts marked 'leader'.
- Parents should be reminded to bring the candidate's baptismal candle to the service.
- The church could be decorated with candidates' religious artwork. A path or set of cut-out footprints could symbolise the journey of life. The names of the children and the names of their sponsors could be appropriately displayed (with due regard for GDPR and safeguarding principles). At the centre of the display should be:
 1. A bowl of water;
 2. The Paschal candle;
 3. Oil of chrism.
- Music is an important element – each situation will be different. The *Grow in Love* series provides a large selection of child-friendly hymns that may be incorporated as appropriate.
- A booklet based on the accompanying template should be provided for those present in order to enable their full participation.
- In a spirit of welcome, it is encouraged to provide those attending with a cup of tea/coffee etc. after the ceremony.

OPENING HYMN (ALL STAND)

SIGN OF THE CROSS AND LITURGICAL GREETING

Celebrant: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Celebrant: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

All: And with your spirit.

CELEBRANT’S WORDS OF WELCOME

The celebrant may add their own words of welcome to the candidates, their parents, family members, sponsors, and teachers.

A TIME FOR MEMORIES (ALL SIT)

Leader: Let us pause for a moment to think back, through the mists of time, to that day when those who have enrolled to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation were born – that day they came into the world – the beginning of their life journey.

Pause for 30 seconds – soft music in the background.

Leader: For a moment now, let us call to mind their names and their ‘firsts’ – their first words, their first steps, their first birthday, their first day at school, their first sports game, their First Confession, First Communion...

Pause for 30 seconds – soft music in the background.

Leader: Each and every human person is unique. No two people are the same. Each and every human life is a precious gift from God – let us pause to take joy for a moment in each of our candidates’ unique character, their ways and interests and let us thank God for the unique gift of each and every one of them.

Pause for 30 seconds – soft music in the background.

Leader: I ask those here present who have enrolled to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation – to think of all those in life who have looked after them, who have loved them, who have been kind to them and to say thank you to God for those important people in their lives.

Pause for 30 seconds – soft music in the background.

Leader: At times, our journey throughout life can be difficult – there can be pain and loss and sadness. For the sadness we have had in life and for the losses - especially the loss of those we have known and loved who have died – we pray for healing and for peace as we move forward.

Pause for 30 seconds – soft music in the background.

Leader: Let us bring our journey of life and the journey of life of those enrolled for confirmation, our ups and our downs, before God this evening as we pray together.

All: God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference, living one day at a time; enjoying one moment at a time; taking this world as it is and not as I would have it; trusting that You will make all things right if I surrender to Your will; so that I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with You forever in the next. Amen.

–Reinhold Niebuhr

HYMN TO THE HOLY SPIRIT



LISTENING TO GOD’S WORD FROM THE BIBLE

Leader: A reading from the Gospel of John.

There was one of the Pharisees called Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews who came to Jesus by night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you have come from God as a teacher; for no one could perform the signs that you do unless God were with him.” Jesus answered: “In all truth I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” Nicodemus said, “How can anyone who is already old be born? Is it possible to go back into the womb again and be born?” Jesus replied: “In all truth I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born through water and the Spirit; what is born of human nature is human; what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be surprised when I say: You must be born from above. The wind blows where it pleases; you can hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

REFLECTION

Here the priest, a parent, or guest speaker may deliver a short appropriate reflection on the meaning of Confirmation.

MEMORIES OF BAPTISM

Leader: At the heart of Christianity is the belief that the secret to a life well lived is to be found in Jesus Christ. For the Christian, knowing Jesus and living by his wisdom profoundly enriches the journey of life. It provides a light in dark times and a sure compass to guide us on our way.

Christians believe that in a unique way the day of our baptism marks the beginning of life lived with Jesus as a part of it. That day when water was poured on our head and those words were prayed over us – “I baptise you in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

Leader: For a moment now let us recall memories of the candidates' baptism – that day these boys and girls began their Christian journey.

From the Paschal Candle (the symbol of the presence of God among his people), the candidates' baptismal candles are now lit and held by their parents. Meanwhile a suitable hymn may be sung or soft music played.

Leader: Water is used at baptism to symbolise our spiritual rebirth as members of the Christian family. Let us see in this water a reminder of the day these candidates and indeed all Christians here present were baptised.

Water is poured into a bowl and the congregation is sprinkled. Meanwhile a suitable hymn may be sung or soft music played.

Leader: Dear parents – this candle was given to you the day you brought your child to Church for baptism. It was given as a symbol of that Christian faith that life is better with Jesus as a part of it. It was given to you to be kept burning brightly and to be passed on, through word and action, to your child as they grew up. You did this as you taught them about God and Jesus – as you brought them to Mass and celebrated the sacraments with them – in particular First Confession and First Holy Communion. Now as these candidates prepare to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and reach the culmination of their journey into becoming a full member of the Christian family – I invite you to hand that candle to their confirmation sponsor or their representative.

The candle is now handed to the candidate's sponsor.

Leader: Sponsors are people whom we turn to as good examples of what it is to live the Christian faith – we invite them to accompany us and to assist us by word and example as we grow into faith-filled adults. Sponsors, you are now tasked with assisting the parents of these children in handing on the light of faith. As a powerful symbol of this, in a few weeks,

you will hand the candle you now hold to the candidate you are sponsoring during the Confirmation ceremony.

In the meantime, you are called to renew in your own heart your Christian faith and to prepare yourselves to be the very best of teacher in the ways of the faith to those you sponsor. The Christian community prays for you in a special way at this time. Amen.

All sit. The baptismal candles are now extinguished.

LOOKING FORWARD TO THE CELEBRATION OF CONFIRMATION

Leader: For Christians, the sacrament of Confirmation completes that journey of becoming a member of the Christian family that began on the day of baptism. Through the Sacrament of Confirmation, Christians believe that God in a very special way gives the Holy Spirit to the boy or girl to be confirmed to accompany them as a spiritual helper and guide on life's journey. The laying on of hands and the anointing with the Holy Oil of Chrism have been used to convey this gift from God.

We bring forward the Sacred Oil of Chrism. It is made from olive oil mixed with a perfume called balsam. During the Confirmation ceremony, the Bishop will anoint those to be confirmed with it on the forehead. It symbolises how with the Holy Spirit in their heart they are called and empowered to make something wonderful and sweet smelling of their unique lives.

The Oil of Chrism is brought forward in procession – it could be accompanied by people holding candles. It is solemnly shown to the congregation and placed in the sacred space. Meanwhile a hymn may be sung or soft music played in the background.



Leader: I now invite the candidates for Confirmation, their parents and their sponsors to stand and make a formal public commitment to use the time between now and the day of Confirmation to seriously prepare their hearts, their minds and their lives to celebrate the sacrament.

Candidates, parents and sponsors stand.

In these days before God and the Christian community, we solemnly commit ourselves to preparing:

Our hearts – so that we might grow in faith and love.

Our minds – so that we might learn more about the life of Jesus, the Christian message and the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Our lives – so that we might be good people who love and care for one another.

We ask for God’s help with this task and for the prayers of the whole parish community at this time. Amen.



REFLECTION (ALL SIT)

Footprints (Anonymous)

One night a man had a dream. He dreamed he was walking along the beach with the Lord. Across the sky flashed scenes from his life. For each scene, he noticed two sets of footprints in the sand; one belonging to him, and the other to the Lord.

When the last scene of his life flashed before him, he looked back at the footprints in the sand. He noticed that many times along the path of his life there was only one set of footprints. He also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times in his life.

This really bothered him and he questioned the Lord about it. “Lord, you said that once I decided to follow you, you’d walk with me all the way. But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life, there is only one set of footprints. I don’t understand why when I needed you most you would leave me.”

The Lord replied, “My precious, precious child, I love you and I would never leave you. During your times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you.”

BLESSING AND SENDING OUT

Celebrant: Let us bow our heads to pray for God’s blessings.

Pause for silent prayer.

Celebrant: The Lord bless us and keep us; the Lord make his face shine upon us and be gracious to us; the Lord turn his face toward us and give us his peace, both now and forever.

All: Amen.

Celebrant: Let us bless the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

CONCLUDING HYMN (ALL STAND)

