



DIOCESE OF EAST ANGLIA

NOTES FOR THE CELEBRATION OF CONFIRMATION

GENERAL POINTS

1. The bishop is the 'original' and 'ordinary' minister of the sacrament of Confirmation. The date for Confirmations should be arranged for a time when the bishop is available, in consultation with the bishop's secretary.
2. Confirmation will always be celebrated during Mass. The priests of the parish should concelebrate, along with any visiting priests, and the deacons should minister.
3. **On the Sundays of Advent, Lent and Easter, or on a solemnity**, the Mass of the day, with its readings, is celebrated, although one or other of the two readings before the Gospel may be omitted or replaced with one more suitable for Confirmation. Bishop Michael will wear a chasuble of the colour of the day; concelebrating priests may wear either the white diocesan vestment or a chasuble and/or stole of the colour of the day.
4. **On any other day, including the Sundays of the Christmas season and in Ordinary Time**, the proper prayers from the Ritual Mass for Confirmation are to be used (*Roman Missal*, pages 759-763) and the Scripture readings are to be chosen from those given in the *Lectionary* for Confirmation (*Volume III*, pages 86-109) unless the readings of the day are appropriate. Please ensure that the bishop is informed well beforehand of the choice of readings. Bishop Michael will wear a red chasuble; concelebrating priests may wear either the white diocesan chasuble or a red chasuble and/or stole.
5. Except for reading the Scripture Readings and General Intercessions, and bringing forward the gifts, the candidates for Confirmation should **not be involved in any other ministry** during the Mass (e.g. altar server, choir, collection, welcomers, etc). They should be enabled to focus on prayerful preparation for the celebration, and on their distinctive participation in the rite.
6. The Rite of Confirmation within Mass is already full enough of symbolism and action. **Please do not add extra elements** (e.g. drama, mime, dance, etc) as these can be a distraction from the celebration of the sacrament.
7. **Music** is a vital part of ensuring that the Confirmation Mass is a joyful occasion. Ideally the candidates should participate in choosing the music. Please ensure, however, that the music does not delay the ceremony at times when it should otherwise continue. Settings of the Ordinary of the Mass ('Lord, have mercy', 'Glory to God', 'Holy, holy, holy', 'Lamb of God', etc) should be well-known ones in which the whole congregation can take part.
8. It is always good to have a **rehearsal** with the candidates on some suitable day before the celebration. This should include their responses during the central rite of Confirmation.
9. In accordance with Canon 893, the **Sponsor** must fulfil the conditions required for a Baptismal sponsor/godparent. These are listed in Canon 874. Ideally, the sponsor should be chosen by the candidate. He or she must be a practising Catholic who has already been confirmed. He or she should be aged 16 or more unless the parish priest considers there is a just reason for an

exception. The sponsor should be someone who will be a real example of living faith to the candidate, accompanying them in the name of the Catholic Church. The candidate's parents cannot be a sponsor. Ideally, it should be one of the candidate's Baptismal sponsors/godparents, so long as they fulfil the other requirements outlined above. As Canon 892 states, 'The sponsor's function is to take care that the person confirmed behaves as a true witness of Christ and faithfully fulfils the duties inherent in this sacrament.'

10. Candidates are welcome to choose a new **Confirmation Name**, but there is no requirement to do so. They may retain their baptismal name. Any specially-chosen confirmation name should be that of a saint or an appropriate Old Testament figure. Candidates should be encouraged to choose the name of someone with whom they can identify, learn about and be inspired by now and in the future.

THE CONFIRMATION MASS

11. Every church is different, but candidates should ideally be seated with their sponsor and immediate family, with each candidate seated at the end of the bench, next to the central aisle. Please ensure that any disabled candidate is appropriately placed (Bishop Michael is happy to go to such candidates for the anointing when necessary).
 12. The bishop will bring a **folder** which includes the Rite of Confirmation, as well as the Prayers from the Confirmation Mass and Final Blessing.
 13. The bishop will bring his own **oil stock**. A small table should be prepared for the oils, covered with a cloth and with a lighted candle.
 14. All **altar servers** should be encouraged to come to the Confirmation Mass. If there are enough altar servers present, two should be allocated to look after the bishop's mitre and pastoral staff. These follow the bishop in the procession. Immediately on arriving at the sanctuary, before going to the altar, the bishop will hand his mitre and staff to the servers, who take them to an appropriate place. The bishop will usually wear his mitre only for the non-Gospel Scripture readings and for the anointing with Chrism, as well as for the final blessing. He will need his pastoral staff only for the Gospel and the final blessing. This is flexible depending on the servers available.
 15. **The Gospel** is to be read by a deacon, or if there is no deacon, by a concelebrating priest.
 16. After the Gospel, the congregation sits. Bishop Michael will stand in front of the congregation. **The bishop himself will read the names of the candidates**, and invite each to stand in their place. Once all the names have been called, the bishop will invite the candidates to sit, and will preach the homily. Please ensure the bishop has a list of the names before the Mass, with a note of any difficult names to pronounce.
 17. After the homily, he will invite the candidates only to stand in their places, and to **renew their baptismal promises**. Please urge them to answer 'I do' loudly together. The candidates remain standing after the Profession of Faith.
18. Parish priests may wish to consider including an optional element at this point. Each candidate will have a **baptismal candle**; after the homily and before the profession of faith, candidates alone stand in their places, holding their candles. The parish priest and other clergy will light tapers from the Paschal Candle and then light the candles of the candidates. The bishop will then proceed with the renewal of the Baptismal Profession of Faith. The candidates continue to hold their candles until they come to stand before the bishop for the anointing with chrism, when they hand their candle to their sponsor. After the anointing, the candles could be placed on a stand prepared especially, and remain lit until the end of Mass. Alternatively, the sponsors could extinguish the candles when back in their seats.

19. A **book-bearer** is required to hold the bishop's folder in front of him for the Profession of Faith and the Rite of Confirmation. Ideally this should be a junior server small enough not to block the bishop's view of the candidates and congregation.
20. After the renewal of baptism faith, the concelebrating priests come and stand either side of the bishop. They do not extend hands over the candidates. [*Priests only extend hands when they have been invited to join the bishop in conferring the sacrament of Confirmation to some of the candidates: this will rarely be the case in East Anglia*]
21. For the **laying-on of hands**, the rite will depend on the number of candidates to be confirmed. If there is a small number (12 or under), the bishop will invite the candidates to come forward (having passed their candles to their sponsors) and to stand in a line together in front of him, and he will lay hands on each individually. After the prayer, he will invite them to return to their places, and to sit.
22. If there is a larger number, the candidates remain standing in their places, and the bishop will extend his hands over them all. After the prayer, all candidates sit.
23. As soon as the prayer is finished, a server brings the mitre to the bishop. A deacon or priest brings the oil of chrism to the bishop, who will remain standing for the **anointing with chrism**. The parish priest stands at the left-hand of the bishop. Each candidate then comes forward (carrying their baptismal candle if used) with their sponsor. It is good to have an usher to direct the candidates forward at the appropriate time. The sponsor should carry a card or piece of paper with the candidate's confirmation name in large capital letters; the sponsor hands this to the parish priest, who shows it to the bishop. (If the candidate is carrying a baptismal candle, the candidate hands this to his sponsor, who holds it in his/her left hand) The sponsor places his/her right hand on the candidate's right shoulder. [The special cards with the candidate's confirmation name need not be those used for registration purposes]
24. The candidate stands for the anointing. The bishop **anoints** each candidate, saying 'Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit'. The candidate answers clearly 'Amen'. The bishop greets the newly-confirmed with the words 'Peace be with you', to which he or she replies 'And also with you'. Please encourage the candidates to respond enthusiastically – and with a smile! The newly-confirmed and sponsor now return to their seats by the side-aisles and sit.
25. After all candidates have been anointed, the bishop will **wash his hands**: lemon, water and a small towel are sufficient.
26. A server then collects the mitre from the bishop, and the whole congregation stands for the **General Intercessions**. The bishop will introduce and conclude the prayers with his own formula. It is recommended that the candidates themselves be involved in writing the intercessions, which should always be in the form of petitions ('We pray for...') rather than prayers ('Dear God...'). The readers should remain at the lectern until the bishop has finished his closing prayer.
27. Some of the newly-confirmed should bring forward the gifts at the **Offertory Procession**.
28. **Eucharistic Prayer 2** will normally be used, with the Preface of the Holy Spirit II (*Roman Missal* page 458). The parish priest should allocate the two concelebrants parts before Mass begins.
29. **The Distribution of Holy Communion** should be under both kinds unless restrictions in space make this impossible. Distribution should not take a disproportionate amount of time. Only if there are not enough ordinary ministers of Holy Communion (priests and deacons) should Lay Ministers assist in the distribution.

30. **Bishop Michael will invite the newly-confirmed to receive Holy Communion before everyone else.** This includes the servers, choir, etc. Even if the chalice is not available for the whole congregation, the newly-confirmed are to be invited to receive Holy Communion under both kinds on this occasion. It should be emphasised that receiving Holy Communion as a confirmed person takes on an even deeper significance. Each candidate receives the Body of Christ from Bishop Michael, and then receives the Blood of Christ from the accompanying ministers.
31. If at all possible, **Confirmation Certificates** should be ready for distribution by the bishop at the end of Mass. Such certificates can be obtained from religious publishers, or produced on a computer. Bishop Michael is happy to sign these before the Confirmation Mass. After the Post-Communion Prayer and any notices, and before the final Blessing, the bishop will invite the newly-confirmed to come forward and stand in front of the altar. The parish priest hands the certificates to him one by one; the bishop reads the name and the newly-confirmed collects their certificate; all remain standing there until the bishop has said his final words and invited to congregation to applaud. Some parishes give a small gift to each newly-confirmed at this point. The group then return to their seats.
32. The servers then bring Bishop Michael his mitre and staff for the **Solemn Blessing**, which will be that given in the *Roman Missal* (page 760) and contained in the bishop's folder.
33. After Mass, Bishop Michael is happy to return to the sanctuary (or elsewhere as arranged) in his vestments for any group and individual **photos**. He will then invest and join the newly-confirmed and their families and guests at the reception afterwards.
34. Please send the bishop a copy of any specially-prepared Mass **booklet** or sheet for the Confirmation before the celebration.

These norms were established on 21 July 2003 and revised slightly on 19 August 2006.

They will be open to ongoing review and revision as they are tested by experience. Parish priests are invited to send their reflections after the Confirmation Mass has been celebrated in accordance with these norms.