

Confirmation in the Anglican Diocese of San Joaquin

Confirmation is when we as Christians publicly ratify the vows made in our baptism, and it can be especially meaningful to those who were baptized as infants or young children. Confirmation provides a public commitment to live into one's Christian identity with ministry and service, and proclaims one's identity as a member of the Anglican Church.

The Nature of Confirmation

As the Bishop in apostolic succession lays hands on those to be confirmed they are strengthened by the Holy Spirit for: 1) service in ministry and mission, 2) growth in holiness and increase in the knowledge of and obedience to God's Word, and 3) that they may be preserved unto eternal life.¹

In Confirmation, the candidates publicly confirm or renew their Baptismal vows and promise to follow Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. The congregation promises to support the candidates in their Christian lives.²

Though called a sacrament by many, Confirmation is not one of the two "Sacraments of the Lord" (Baptism and Holy Communion) that were instituted in a specific form by Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, Confirmation is one of the "commonly called" sacraments that is allowed, if not commended, by Scripture.³

Confirmation is administered only by a Bishop; thus while it brings the persons being Confirmed into the local church, it also manifests their connectedness with both the historic, present, and future parts of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church that exists beyond the local congregation.

Who should be Confirmed?

Candidates must be baptized and at an age where they are able to use reason and discretion to be accountable for their decisions (13 and older is a good standard). Confirmation must not be required of any person. It must never be thought of as a rote ceremony but should be heartily desired. "For with the heart one believes."⁴ Nevertheless, anyone who teaches others should be confirmed, as teachers are held to a higher standard.⁵ Confirmation is a requirement for certain other lay ministries and ordained ministry as well.

Confirmation, like Baptism, is not to be repeated if validly performed. Persons confirmed invalidly in other denominations not in Apostolic succession can be validly confirmed. For example, those confirmed as Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox may be received but not confirmed. Those confirmed as Lutherans and Methodists would be confirmed and not received.

Instruction of Candidates

Candidates must receive instruction in the Nicene Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Catechism of the Church, and the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New

¹ Acts 8:14-17

² Ephesians 2:10

³ Articles of Religion, XXV

⁴ Romans 10:10

⁵ James 3:1

Testament. The instruction for Confirmation should last at least 4-5 months unless a candidate is given a dispensation by the Bishop.

The Benefits of Confirmation

- **Confession:** Publicly acknowledging Christ is transformative, as seen in Jesus' statement "So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven," and in Joshua's confession "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." As knees are bowed and tongues confess, God confirms his servants.⁶
- **Accountability:** Publicly accepting the responsibility for one's own spiritual formation sets one firmly on the path to increasing maturity in the Christian walk.
- **An Offering to God:** In Confirmation one shows forth God's praise not only with the lips but by giving up one's self unto His service.⁷
- **Commissioning and Empowerment:** In the Laying on of Hands and prayer the Bishop commissions the candidates in the power of the Holy Spirit for the service to which the Lord has called them.⁸

Before the Confirmation

The Bishop's usual practice is to meet in person with candidates prior to the service to hear the story of their faith and why they want to be confirmed. Occasionally this type of one-on-one meeting will not be possible.

To facilitate this he requires that each candidate write a brief spiritual autobiography. The following are some the bare minimum types of information a spiritual autobiography of this sort should provide:

- What is your faith background? Did you grow up in a Christian home environment, some other faith, or with no faith at all?
- When did you begin your relationship with Jesus? Has that relationship been constant since your baptism as an infant, or were you older?
- What impact has following Jesus had on your life? What role has your faith played in your day-to-day activities, whether school, work, or social/recreational?
- What do you think Confirmation is, and why is being Confirmed/Received or Reaffirming your faith something you want to do right now
- What does being an Anglican mean to you?
- Do you believe the Nicene Creed? Why is it important?

These autobiographies should be in the Bishop's possession no later than two weeks prior to the date of Confirmation/Reception/Reaffirmation.

⁶ Matthew 10:38; Luke 12:8; Joshua 25:15

⁷ C.f., The General Thanksgiving; Romans 12:1

⁸ Ephesians 2:10