

Customary for Confirmation/Reception/Reaffirmation in the Diocese of Bethlehem.

Revised 1/10

Note: There may be pastoral reasons to make exceptions to the guidelines that follow. Please do not hesitate to discuss any such concerns with the bishop.

Before the service:

- If possible, please have the group being confirmed/received or making reaffirmation meet with the bishop briefly for introductions and a prayer 20 minutes *before the service*.
- Please be doubly sure to have previously rehearsed them in the parts of the service they are to speak, and remind them to bring their prayer books or service leaflets when they are presented. Their being able to participate is of the first importance.

Confirmation

with forms for Reception and for the Reaffirmation of Baptismal Vows

[A first-person note: I will not second guess you about whom you present for confirmation, whom for reception, as the situations can become very complex. I explain my own view, for what it is worth, in the appendix to this customary.]

The color for the service is that of the season, except that white or red may be worn on otherwise “green” days. Please advise the bishop of your choice.

Please also advise the bishop as to which parts of the service your congregation has some experience of as sung. Please be sure to print the text of the pontifical blessing (in the Altar Book p. 232, and Hymnal, no S-173) in the service folder, even if it is not to be sung.

Please use the propers of the day for all Sunday morning confirmations. On other occasions we will need to discuss the choice of lessons.

The deacon or priest reading the gospel should come to the bishop for a blessing before going to the place where the gospel is read. After “The Gospel of the Lord” and the people’s response, the gospel book, if there is one, should be brought to the bishop, open, for veneration.

Presentation and Examination of the Candidates

Prayers for the Candidates

The Bishop then says to the congregation

Let us now pray for *these persons* who have renewed *their* commitment to Christ.]

The petitions on pages 305-306 may be used.

A long pause to turn pages here just confuses people, and they turn back. *It is simplest to say, "the response to each petition is, 'Lord, hear our prayer.'"* And just start praying without indicating a page number in the service folder or by way of announcement. Please do use this litany, and *insert any local needs or concerns* in petitions of similar form, with the same response, at the end of the petitions for the candidates. The bishop will then conclude with the collect.

For Confirmation

The Bishop lays hands upon each one and says

Strengthen, O Lord, your servant *N.* with your Holy Spirit; empower *him* for your service; and sustain *him* all the days of *his* life. *Amen.*

For Reception

N., we recognize you as a member of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church, and we receive you into the fellowship of this Communion. God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, bless, preserve, and keep you. *Amen.*

For Reaffirmation

N., may the Holy Spirit, who has begun a good work in you, direct and uphold you in the service of Christ and his kingdom. *Amen.*

Please present each candidate by name. If the candidates are to be received or are making a reaffirmation, indicate that as well. Candidates for all three rites kneel.

Please do not send the candidates back to their seats if the architecture permits. This enables the bishop to greet each one at the Peace.

After the Peace, please make any necessary announcements; the bishop will then say the offertory sentence.

The deacon or priest who sets the table should put the chalice and paten side by side, not front and back, with chalice on the right.

The bishop is accustomed to use the lavabo.

BCP p. 322: "It is appropriate that the other priests present stand with the celebrant at the Altar, and join in the consecration of the gifts...." Thus, at the eucharist, priests in the parish should concelebrate with the bishop. Please see the customary for celebrations at which the Bishop presides for details.

At visitations, we use either Rite I or II *according to the use your parish follows*, from the offertory on. You may select the eucharistic prayer, except please note that in Rite II, Prayer C is not employed because of its structural anomalies. Prayer D is fine, but one wonders about the spiritual utility of using it in an already-long liturgy.

Vessels for the distribution should be made ready during the fraction anthem, before the invitation is said. Concelebrants will communicate themselves.

The benediction is ordinarily the pontifical blessing, said or sung, as you desire.

The dismissal should be said facing the people.

APPENDIX

Concerning the Service

“In the course of their Christian development, those baptized at an early age are expected, when they are ready and have been duly prepared, to make a mature public affirmation of their faith and commitment to the responsibilities of their Baptism and to receive the laying on of hands by the bishop.

“Those baptized as adults, unless baptized with laying on of hands by a bishop, are also expected to make a public affirmation of their faith and commitment to the responsibilities of their Baptism in the presence of a bishop and to receive the laying on of hands.”

A personal viewpoint:

As mentioned above, I will not second guess you about whom you present for confirmation, whom for reception. What follows is how I understand the matter. I acknowledge that there are other approaches very much alive in the Church, and do not insist on my interpretation.

I take the paragraphs just quoted from the BCP in their plain and literal sense. In our church Confirmation is understood to be a combination protestant/catholic moment when a baptized person takes an adult stand for Christ in the presence of the local church and before the bishop as representative of the catholic church, and then receiving the laying-on of hands (with anointing) for the Holy Spirit. This is not what many protestant groups intend, *regardless of how many years of instruction or depth of Bible learning the process involves.*

Thus everyone who has not yet made a “mature public affirmation of their faith and commitment to the responsibilities of their Baptism” before a bishop in the historic succession is appropriately presented for confirmation. This specifically includes Roman Catholics who received the very differently-intended Roman rite of confirmation while a child, and specifically includes the Orthodox, whose (repeatable) rite of chrismation is not equated to confirmation in their theology when they talk among themselves. (The idea of chrismation being the same as confirmation was developed for the benefit of western thinkers at the Council of Florence, when the idea was introduced into order to get foreign aid for the Armenians. Similarly, the notion of chrism as a virtual of “bishop in a bottle” does not bear the stamp of antiquity.)

Basically, according to this view, the only people to be presented for “reception into communion,” then, are those former Roman Catholics whom you are convinced have already made a *mature* public affirmation of their faith before a bishop in historic succession. ***Again, I will not second guess you on whom you present,*** but want you to know how I see it. The relationship with the Lutherans complicates this tremendously, and I will trust the decision you and the candidate make, but please remember that almost no Lutheran has been confirmed by a bishop, whether in or out of valid succession. My expectation is that the problem will be dealt with in the next round of liturgical revision. In the meantime, my

tactical solution is that both those confirmed and received are chrismated and then blessed with the hand. Notwithstanding everything I have written, *PLEASE do not make the decision whether to present for confirmation or reception become a stumbling block for those who have scruples in the matter.*