

CANON LAW RELATED TO CONFIRMATION

PART I : THE SACRAMENTS

Can. 840 The sacraments of the New Testament were instituted by Christ the Lord and entrusted to the Church. As actions of Christ and of the Church, they are signs and means by which faith is expressed and strengthened, worship is offered to God and our sanctification is brought about. Thus they contribute in the most effective manner to establishing, strengthening and manifesting ecclesiastical communion. Accordingly, in the celebration of the sacraments both the sacred ministers and all the other members of Christ's faithful must show great reverence and due care.



Can. 841 Since the sacraments are the same throughout the universal Church, and belong to the divine deposit of faith, only the supreme authority in the Church can approve or define what is needed for their validity. It belongs to the same authority, or to another competent authority in accordance with can. 838 §3 and 4, to determine what is required for their lawful celebration, administration and reception and for the order to be observed in their celebration.

Can. 842

§1 A person who has not received baptism cannot validly be admitted to the other sacraments.

§2 The sacraments of baptism, confirmation and the blessed Eucharist so complement one another that all three are required for full Christian initiation.

Can. 843

§1 Sacred ministers may not deny the sacraments to those who opportunely ask for them, are properly disposed and are not prohibited by law from receiving them.

§2 According to their respective offices in the Church, both pastors of souls and all other members of Christ's faithful have a duty to ensure that those who ask for the sacraments are prepared for their reception. This should be done through proper evangelization and catechetical instruction, in accordance with the norms laid down by the competent authority.

Can. 844

§1 Catholic ministers may lawfully administer the sacraments only to catholic members of Christ's faithful, who equally may lawfully receive them only from catholic ministers, except as provided in §2, 3 and 4 of this canon and in can. 861 §2.

§2 Whenever necessity requires or a genuine spiritual advantage commends it, and provided the danger of error or indifferentism is avoided, Christ's faithful for whom it is physically or morally impossible to approach a catholic minister, may lawfully receive the sacraments of penance, the Eucharist and anointing of the sick from non-Catholic ministers in whose Churches these sacraments are valid.

§3 Catholic ministers may lawfully administer the sacraments of penance, the Eucharist and anointing of the sick to members of the eastern Churches not in full communion with the catholic Church, if they spontaneously ask for them and are properly disposed. The same applies to members of other Churches which the Apostolic See judges to be in the same position as the aforesaid eastern Churches so far as the sacraments are concerned.

§4 If there is a danger of death or if, in the judgment of the diocesan Bishop or of the Episcopal Conference, there is some other grave and pressing need, catholic ministers may lawfully administer these same sacraments to other Christians not in full communion with the catholic Church, who cannot approach a minister of their own community and who spontaneously ask for them, provided that they demonstrate the catholic faith in respect of these sacraments and are properly disposed.

§5 In respect of the cases dealt with in §2, 3 and 4, the diocesan Bishop or the Episcopal Conference is not to issue general norms except after consultation with the competent authority, at least at the local level, of the non-Catholic Church or community concerned.

Can. 845

§1 Because they imprint a character, the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and order cannot be repeated.

§2 If after diligent enquiry a prudent doubt remains as to whether the sacraments mentioned in §1 have been conferred at all, or conferred validly, they are to be conferred conditionally.

Can. 846

§1 The liturgical books, approved by the competent authority, are to be faithfully followed in the celebration of the sacraments. Accordingly, no one may on a personal initiative add to or omit or alter anything in those books.

§2 The ministers are to celebrate the sacraments according to their own rite.

Can. 847

§1 In administering sacraments in which holy oils are to be used, the minister must use oil made from olives or other plants, which, except as provided in can. 999, n. 2, has recently been consecrated or blessed by a Bishop. Older oil is not to be used except in a case of necessity.

§2 The parish priest is to obtain the holy oils from his own Bishop and keep them carefully in fitting custody.

Can. 848 For the administration of the sacraments the minister may not ask for anything beyond the offerings which are determined by the competent authority, and he must always ensure that the needy are not deprived of the help of the sacraments by reason of poverty.

TITLE II: THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

Can. 879 The sacrament of confirmation confers a character. By it the baptized continue their path of Christian initiation. They are enriched with the gift of the Holy Spirit, and are more closely linked to the Church. They are made strong and more firmly obliged by word and deed to witness to Christ and to spread and defend the faith.

CHAPTER I : THE CELEBRATION OF CONFIRMATION

Can. 880

§1 The sacrament of confirmation is conferred by anointing with chrism on the forehead in a laying on of hands, and by the words prescribed in the approved liturgical books.

§2 The chrism to be used in the sacrament of confirmation must have been consecrated by a Bishop, even when the sacrament is administered by a priest.

Can. 881 It is desirable that the sacrament of confirmation be celebrated in a church and indeed during Mass. However, for a just and reasonable cause it may be celebrated apart from Mass and in any fitting place.

CHAPTER II : THE MINISTER OF CONFIRMATION

Can. 882 The ordinary minister of confirmation is a Bishop. A priest can also validly confer this sacrament if he has the faculty to do so, either from the general law or by way of a special grant from the competent authority.

Can. 883 The following have, by law, the faculty to administer confirmation:

1° within the confines of their jurisdiction, those who in law are equivalent to a diocesan Bishop;

2° in respect of the person to be confirmed, the priest who by virtue of his office or by mandate of the diocesan Bishop baptizes an adult or admits a baptized adult into full communion with the catholic Church;

3° in respect of those in danger of death, the parish priest or indeed any priest.

Can. 884

§1 The diocesan Bishop is himself to administer confirmation or to ensure that it is administered by another Bishop. If necessity so requires, he may grant to one or several specified priests the faculty to administer this sacrament.

§2 For a grave reason the Bishop, or the priest who by law or by special grant of the competent authority has the faculty to confirm, may in individual cases invite other priests to join with him in administering the sacrament.

Can. 885

§1 The diocesan Bishop is bound to ensure that the sacrament of confirmation is conferred upon his subjects who duly and reasonably request it.

§2 A priest who has this faculty must use it for those in whose favor it was granted.

Can. 886

§1 A Bishop in his own diocese may lawfully administer the sacrament of confirmation even to the faithful who are not his subjects, unless there is an express prohibition by their own Ordinary.

§2 In order lawfully to administer confirmation in another diocese, unless it be to his own subjects, a Bishop needs the permission, at least reasonably presumed, of the diocesan Bishop.

Can. 887 A priest who has the faculty to administer confirmation may, within the territory assigned to him, lawfully administer this sacrament even to those from outside the territory, unless there is a prohibition by their own Ordinary. He cannot, however, validly confirm anyone in another territory, without prejudice to the provision of can. 883, n.3.

Can. 888 Within the territory in which they can confer confirmation, ministers may confirm even in exempt places.

CHAPTER III : THE PERSONS TO BE CONFIRMED

Can. 889

§1 Every baptized person who is not confirmed, and only such a person, is capable of receiving confirmation.

§2 Apart from the danger of death, to receive confirmation lawfully a person who has the use of reason must be suitably instructed, properly disposed and able to renew the baptismal promises.

Can. 890 The faithful are bound to receive this sacrament at the proper time. Parents and pastors of souls, especially parish priests, are to see that the faithful are properly instructed to receive the sacrament and come to it at the opportune time.

Can. 891 The sacrament of confirmation is to be conferred on the faithful at about the age of discretion, unless the Episcopal Conference has decided on a different age, or there is a danger of death or, in the judgment of the minister, a grave reason suggests otherwise.

CHAPTER IV : SPONSORS

Can. 892 As far as possible the person to be confirmed is to have a sponsor. 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.

Can. 893

§1 A person who would undertake the office of sponsor must fulfill the conditions mentioned in can. 874 which reads:

§1 To be admitted to undertake the office of sponsor, a person must:

1° be appointed by the candidate for baptism, or by the parents or whoever stands in their place, or failing these, by the parish priest or the minister; to be appointed the person must be suitable for this role and have the intention of fulfilling it;

2° be not less than sixteen years of age, unless a different age has been stipulated by the diocesan Bishop, or unless the parish priest or the minister considers that there is a just reason for an exception to be made;

3° be a catholic who has been confirmed and has received the blessed Eucharist, and who lives a life of faith which befits the role to be undertaken;

4° not labor under a canonical penalty, whether imposed or declared;

5° not be either the father or the mother of the person to be baptized.

§2 A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community may be admitted only in company with a catholic sponsor, and then simply as a witness to the baptism.

§2 It is desirable that the sponsor chosen be the one who undertook this role at baptism.

CHAPTER V : PROOF AND REGISTRATION OF CONFIRMATION

Can. 894 To establish that confirmation has been conferred, the provisions of can. 876 are to be observed.

Can. 895 The names of those confirmed, the minister, the parents, the sponsors and the place and date of the confirmation are to be recorded in the confirmation register of the diocesan curia or, wherever this has been prescribed by the Episcopal Conference or by the diocesan Bishop, in the register to be kept in the parochial archive. The parish priest must notify the parish priest of the place of the baptism that the confirmation was conferred, so that it be recorded in the baptismal register, in accordance with can. 535 §2 which reads *"In the register of baptisms, a note is to be made of confirmation and of matters pertaining to the canonical status of the faithful by reason of marriage, without prejudice to the provision of can. 1133, and by reason of adoption, the reception of sacred order, the making of perpetual profession in a religious institute, or a change of rite. These annotations are always to be reproduced on a baptismal certificate."*

Can. 896 If the parish priest of the place was not present, the minister, personally or through someone else, is to notify him as soon as possible that the confirmation was conferred.