

Confirmation: When does a priest need delegation?

The *Code of Canon Law* of the Catholic Church states that “the ordinary minister of confirmation is a bishop”. However, it also allows for priests [presbyters] provided with this faculty by law or by special grant to validly administer confirmation (canon 882)

THE FACULTY TO CONFIRM MUST BE REQUESTED BY PRIESTS WHEN:

- The person to be confirmed is an already BAPTIZED CATHOLIC and is NOT in danger of death (canon 884, §1). He/she must not have been validly confirmed previously.
- The person to be confirmed was PREVIOUSLY RECEIVED INTO THE FULL COMMUNION of the Catholic Church and has not been validly confirmed previously.
Note: this is the case with parish confirmation ceremonies when the bishop cannot be present. Also, the priest may request faculties to confirm a Catholic who is not already confirmed and is preparing for marriage (note canon 1065, §1).

WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF HIS PARISH, PASTORS AND PAROCHIAL VICARS CAN CONFIRM BY LAW WITHOUT REQUESTING FACULTIES WHEN:

- Baptizing a person who is AGE 7 OR OLDER. Confirmation and Holy Communion are also to be administered to the same persons during the same liturgy unless serious reasons prevent this (canons 883, §2 and 866)
Note: this most often takes place at the Easter Vigil, where “catechumens” are baptized, confirmed and receive Holy Communion.
- Receiving a VALIDLY BAPTIZED, NON-CATHOLIC CHRISTIAN AGE 7 OR OLDER into the Catholic faith. Confirmation and Holy Communion are to follow (canon 883, §2)
Note: this also occurs most frequently at the Easter Vigil, when “candidates” are welcomed into the Church and receive the sacraments of Confirmation and Holy Communion.
- Readmitting into full communion a baptized non-confirmed Catholic who previously committed APOSTASY (rejected Christianity entirely)
- Readmitting into full communion a baptized non-confirmed Catholic who THROUGH NO PERSONAL FAULT was raised in a NON-CATHOLIC religion

Note: This section also applies to those priests who have been given a mandate to confirm (for example, Vicars General and other priests to whom the Bishop entrusts this responsibility).

ANY PRIEST CAN CONFIRM WITHOUT DELEGATION WHEN:

- A person is in danger of death (canon 883, §3)
Note: the person is to be baptized first, if not already baptized. The person to be confirmed does not need to be age 7 or older. This includes those baptized in other Christian faiths who are received into the Catholic faith.

Reference: 1983 Code of Canon Law. This can be referenced online at <http://www.jgray.org/codes/cic83eng.html>

Should you have additional questions concerning this matter, please contact Deacon Rick Wells, Chancellor, at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5405, or by e-mail: rwells@dosp.org.