

The faculty to confirm Catholics completing their initiation

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults #409 [Part II – 4/1988 edition; 5/revised edition]

The climax of the entire formation, moreover, will normally be the Easter Vigil, in which the adults will profess baptismal faith, receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, and participate in the Eucharist.

In the US edition, it is clear in #400 that this section (II-4 1988 edition or II-5 revised edition) is speaking about both situations: “adults who were baptized as infants either as Roman Catholics or as members of another Christian community.” Thus, baptized Catholic adults who have not celebrated Confirmation nor received First Communion are to be confirmed when celebrated at the Easter Vigil.

Code of Canon Law #883.2

The following have the faculty of administering confirmation by the law itself:

2. With regard to the person in question, the presbyter who by reason of office or mandate of the diocesan bishop baptizes one who is no longer an infant or one already baptized whom he admits into the full communion of the Catholic Church.

Not every presbyter (priest) has the faculty to confirm at adult baptism or admission into full communion of the Church, but only one who has an office, e.g., the pastor, parochial vicar, chaplain or a specific mandate to do so.

Canon #883.2 was developed from responses made by the Commission for Interpretation of Decrees of Vatican II (1975, 1979) which may be found in *Code of Canon Law: Text and Commentary* or in US National Statutes #28 as quoted here:

Priests mentioned in canon 883:2 also have the faculty to confirm:

a) in the case of the readmission to communion of a baptized Catholic who has been an apostate from the faith,

This is not referring to someone who has joined another Christian community, but rather to someone who has rejected a belief in Jesus through officially joining a non-Christian religion or cult. If the person is seeking readmission after apostasy, the priest has the faculty to confirm upon readmission through the Rite of Reception.

b) in the case of a baptized Catholic who has without fault been instructed in a non-Catholic religion or adhered to a non-Catholic religion;

For example: a child of a mixed religion marriage was baptized in the Catholic Church shortly after his/her birth. However, when seeing that the Catholic spouse was doing nothing about raising the child in the Catholic tradition, the other parent took on the responsibility of rearing the child in his/her tradition. The person, now an adult, understands him/herself to be a member of that Christian community and not of the Catholic community, but his/her faith journey has led him/her to our community and he/she seeks to become a member of our Church. In such a case, the priest who reunites the person with the Catholic Church through the Rite of Reception has the faculty to confirm them. (If, however, the person has of their own volition officially joined another Christian community, they are readmitted not through the Rite of Reception but through the Sacrament of Penance.)

c) but not in the case of a baptized Catholic who without his or her fault never put the faith into practice.

In those situations in which the baptized Catholic has neither rejected the Christian faith nor been raised in another Christian community, but has only been baptized and no further catechetical formation has occurred, the priest does not have the faculty to confirm.

US National Statutes (RCIA, Appendix III) #29

[It is not clear if this statute has been retained as a Norm in the revised edition.]

In the instance mentioned in no. 28c, ...priests who lack the faculty to confirm should seek it from the diocesan bishop, who may...grant the faculty if he judges it necessary.

Various dioceses have responded to this statute in different ways. Be sure to know your diocesan policy concerning the confirmation of baptized Catholics, who through no fault of their own never put the faith into practice.