



PO Box 271227 + Flower Mound, TX + 75027 + 1-800-803-0118 + [www.dritaly.com](http://www.dritaly.com)

## **AGE OF CONFIRMATION: When Local and Universal Law Conflict Congregation for Divine Worship**

Prot. N. 2607/98/L December 18, 1999 Your Excellency:

This Congregation for Divine Worship expresses its appreciation for your kind reply concerning the request of a child of 11 years, resident in your Diocese along with her parents, for reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation in anticipation of the local policy of conferring the Sacrament no sooner than the sophomore year of high school.

In light of Your Excellency's considered response, this Dicastery considers it necessary to respond in some detail to the considerations you raise, and so the case was submitted to a renewed and attentive examination. The Congregation was anxious to communicate the results of this study as soon as possible asking you to note the authoritative nature of the conclusions contained therein.

At the same time this Dicastery has considered it important to respond to the considerations raised by Your Excellency in declining to dispense the girl *from the* Diocesan Policy in order that she might anticipate her reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation. *This Congregation* wishes, however, to preface its further comments with the observation that Your Excellency's refusal to grant this dispensation must be seen as having the juridic value of an administrative act denying an anticipated conferral of the Sacrament. Among the responsibilities entrusted to this Dicastery is the authoritative examination of appeals against such administrative actions (cf. *Apostolic Constitution, Pastor Bonus, arts. 19, § 1, 63*).

In reply to this Congregation's decision that appropriate steps be taken to provide for the girl's *confirmation* in the near future, Your Excellency had proposed essentially two arguments:

1. Though willingly admitting that the girl is well instructed and that her parents are very good Catholics, you point out that "instruction is not the sole

PO Box 271227 + Flower Mound, TX + 75027 + 1-800-803-0118 + [www.dritaly.com](http://www.dritaly.com)

criterion for recognizing the opportune time for confirmation ... The evaluation is a pastoral one which involves much more than just being instructed".

2. Your Excellency indicates that the Diocesan Policy establishing that conferral of the Sacrament is to be no earlier than the sophomore year of high school is within the right inherent in the law in light of the legislation complementary to can. 891 for the Conference of Bishops to which you belong.

With respect to Your Excellency's first point, it is no doubt true that there is a pastoral judgment to be made in such cases, provided that by "pastoral judgment" one is speaking of the obligation of the Sacred Pastors to determine whether those elements required by the revised *Code of Canon Law* are indeed present, namely, that the person be baptized, have the use of reason, be suitably instructed, and be properly disposed and able to renew the baptismal promises (cf. can. 843, § 1; 889, §2). This Dicastery notes from the testimony submitted by the family, as well as that provided by Your Excellency, that it is clear this young girl has satisfied each of the canonical requisites for reception of the Sacrament.

In regard to Your Excellency's second point, while it is clear that the Diocesan Policy is within the right inherent in the law in light of the complementary legislation for the Conference of Bishops to which you belong for can. 891, it is also clear that any such complementary legislation must always be interpreted in accord with the general norm of law. As has been stated before, the *Code of Canon Law* legislates that 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 (cf. can. 843 §1). Since it has been demonstrated that the girl possesses these requisite qualities, any other considerations, even those contained in the Diocesan Policy, need to be understood in subordination to the general norms governing the reception of the Sacraments.

The Congregation considers it useful to point out that it is the role of the parents as the primary educators of their children and then of the Sacred Pastors to see that candidates for the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation are properly instructed to receive the Sacrament and come to it at the opportune time (cf. can. 890). Consequently, when a member of the faithful wishes to receive this Sacrament, even though not satisfying one or more elements of the local legislation (e.g., being younger than the designated age for administration of the Sacrament), those elements must give way to the fundamental right of the faithful to receive the Sacraments. Indeed, the longer the conferral of the Sacrament is delayed after the age of reason, the greater will be the number of candidates who are prepared for its reception but are deprived of its grace for a considerable period of time.

In conclusion, this Congregation for Divine worship must insist, given the concrete circumstances of the case under consideration, that the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation be extended to the girl as soon as is conveniently possible.

In order to complete our documentation concerning this question, this Dicastery would be grateful to Your Excellency to receive notice of the agreement you will have reached with the family for the administration of the Sacrament.

With every good wish and kind regard, I remain Sincerely yours in Christ,

**Jorge A. Card. MEDINA ESTEVEZ**

Prefect

<http://www.ewtn.com/LIBRARY/CURIA/CDWCONF.HTM> 9/11/00

**Francesco Pio TAMBURRINO**

Archbishop Secretary

*Taken from Notitiae,  
Congregation of Divine Worship,  
Nov. -Dec. 1999*

*Electronic Copyright - 1999 EWTN All Rights Reserved*

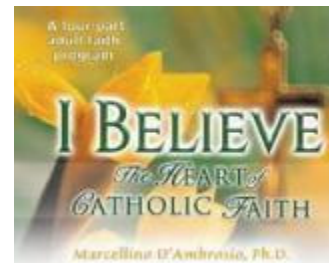
*Provided Courtesy of Eternal Word Television Network 5817 Old Leeds Road Irondale, AL 35210*

[www.ewtn.com](http://www.ewtn.com)

---

### **I Believe - The Heart of Catholic Faith**

The Creed teaches us that God is a communion of Persons - the Trinity- and tell us of their nature and mission. In this four-part series, Marcellino D'Ambrosio uses enlightening metaphors and colorful anecdotes to show us that we are called to "live the Creed" by developing a loving relationship with God the Father, Son, and Spirit, and to have a deep devotion to the one, holy, Catholic and apostolic Church.



### **Great Adventure Bible Time Line Catholic Bible Study --24 talks on DVD**



The Bible Timeline provides a clear understanding of the underlying Scriptural narrative, which is essential to all Bible reading and study. The 24-part Bible Timeline Bible Study dives deep into the Biblical story. A combination of individual reading and study, group discussion, and lecture commentary guides participants as they read through the 14 narrative books of The Bible Timeline and discover the meaning of each in light of the whole.

### **The Virtues: Seven Habits of Champions- DVD**

Dr. Marcellino D'Ambrosio offers a spirited 8-part meditation on the four moral virtues - fortitude, prudence, justice and temperance - as well as the three theological virtues of faith, hope and charity. This program lays out how God's inspiration for Christian living is accessible to everyone and demonstrated for us through the lives of the saints.

**BTW - Be sure to check out the FREE Downloadable outlines.**

