



GUIDELINES FOR THE PREPARATION AND CELEBRATION OF QUINCEAÑERAS IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF MILWAUKEE

I. Introduction

The celebration of a Quinceañera is an important cultural-faith tradition for young women turning fifteen years of age in Mexico, Central and South America, the Caribbean as well as in parts of the United States. It is typically a celebration of thanksgiving to God for the gift of life, and it consists of a special blessing given at Mass or during a Liturgy of the Word service often accompanied by the gift of significant religious items.

“The tribes of Meso-America, possibly the Mayas and Toltecs, celebrated elaborate rites of passage for their young men and women. Rites of passage are known to have existed in the Iberian Peninsula as well. The Spanish conquistadores may have brought the practice to Meso-America. It is possible that the missionaries would have approved of this practice, since these rites closely paralleled Christian practices of initiation and marriage. The ancient Mozarabic Rite of the Iberian Peninsula had elaborate rituals marking the passage of baptized adolescents, each of which included specific references to Christian initiation and each of which was celebrated following the reception of Holy Communion at Mass. With the suppression of the Mozarabic Rite, many of these rituals passed into popular religious practice” (USCCB, [“Fifteen Questions on the Quinceañera”](#)).

The celebration of a Quinceañera highlights the following elements: tradition, family, life and faith. From tribal heritage, the Quinceañera is a celebration that unites family and friends in a great *fiesta* for the young woman’s life. Generally, the Quinceañera (the young woman) might choose the participation of fifteen couples of chamberlains and ladies (Quinceañera’s court), who represent the joy of friendship. Also, the parents of the young woman may select a number of sponsors or *padrinos*, who have helped the young woman to grow materially and spiritually, to be witnesses to the celebration. Clearly, the celebration of a Quinceañera is a teachable moment in the life of the family and the young woman and honors the deep cultural tradition that continues to foster adherence to the Catholic faith. An important aspect of the Quinceañera is the *fiesta* (the social celebration). It is an occasion to celebrate the life of the young woman and the family values and traditions.

The Quinceañera celebration is a moment of commitment of the young woman to her baptismal mission. It offers an opportunity for the young woman to grow in spiritual strength and receive the moral guidance she will need to make adult decisions. The celebration of the Quinceañera involves the dedication of the young woman to Our Blessed Mother, Mary.

II. Pastoral Purpose

The celebration of a Quinceañera gives the young woman, her family, and her friends an opportunity to reflect on the way they live their Catholic faith. The Quinceañera formation program helps the participants to recognize, affirm, and challenge the level of commitment to the Gospel. This celebration is an appropriate time to encourage the youth to become more involved in the life of the Church, and commit themselves to the life of the parish.

III. Requirements

These are the requirements for the celebration of a Quinceañera in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee:

1. PARENTS OR LEGAL GUARDIANS (HEREAFTER, “THE FAMILY”):

- a) The family who wish to celebrate the Quinceañera of their daughter should be Catholic and registered members of the parish in which they are asking for the Quinceañera celebration or ask for permission from their pastor to prepare and/or celebrate the Quinceañera at another parish.
- b) The family should contact the parish at least six months prior to an intended date of the Quinceañera to discuss the date, the formation program, and the liturgical celebration.
- c) The family should pay¹ a stipend of \$ 75.00 (within or outside Mass)², plus the fees related to the formation program and the use of the Church building. Other fees may include the music, decoration and photography; these fees, however, are at the discretion of the particular parish.
- d) Attend and participate in the formation sessions dedicated to the family.

2. THE QUINCEAÑERA:

- a) The Quinceañera must be a baptized Catholic.
- b) Reconciliation and First Communion are required.
- c) If the Quinceañera is not yet confirmed, she should register in confirmation preparation prior to the celebration of the Quinceañera.
- d) Attend and participate in the Quinceañera formation program.

3. GODPARENTS OR SPONSORS (HEREAFTER, “PADRINOS”):

- a) Though the Rite of Quinceañeras does not indicate an exact number of padrinos, it is recommended not to have more than seven padrinos during the liturgical celebration of the Quinceañera.
- b) Padrinos must be Catholic.
- c) Padrinos are not required to attend the formation program.

¹ In some cases, it is a *padrino* or a *madrina* who actually has the responsibility of providing any financial support related to the Quinceañera.

² These fees are approved by the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, and are subjected to revision.

4. **CHAMBERLAINS AND LADIES:**

- a) The participation of chamberlains and ladies is not a requirement; however, they are allowed to participate in the ceremony at the discretion of the pastor, parish administrator or parish director.

IV. **Formation and Preparation**

The formation and preparation of the Quinceañera and her family may take different forms according to the programs available in the parish or in the area. In any case, all formation and preparation programs must follow the Safe Environment Policies and Procedures of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

Every formation program should encourage the candidate to be an active member of the church, and offer options where she can share her talents, time, and treasure. It is an opportunity for the Quinceañera, her family and other participants to renew their faith and commitment to the Church. Formation programs for the Quinceañera and her family should contain *at least* the following parts:

1. **INITIAL MEETING WITH THE PASTOR, PARISH DIRECTOR, PARISH ADMINISTRATOR, OR PASTORAL STAFF PERSON (HEREAFTER, “PASTOR”)**

The pastor should conduct an initial meeting with the Quinceañera and her family. At this meeting, the guidelines and requirements are presented and discussed, as well as the proposed date and time of the celebration. This initial meeting allows the pastor to become acquainted with the family and the Quinceañera, and assess their understanding of the faith and of the Quinceañera celebration. This is also an opportunity to introduce the parish as an extended family and community of faith.

2. **SPIRITUAL RETREAT**

Whether one day or two, the experience of the spiritual retreat allows the Quinceañera to learn how to pray, to deepen her understanding of the person of Jesus Christ, and to articulate her commitment to the Church as she approaches her fifteenth birthday. Though the family is not required to participate in the Quinceañera spiritual retreat, some parishes and programs may invite and include family members to participate in the retreat. This is a discretionary decision of the pastor or program director.

3. **FORMATION SESSIONS**

Both the Quinceañera and the family must participate in a minimum of two and a maximum of four formation sessions. Each session may last between one to two hours. The sessions must address the following questions:

- a) Who is God in my life? Who is Jesus? Who is the Holy Spirit?
- b) What are the Sacraments? What is the Church?

- c) What is God's design of human sexuality?
- d) Why do I have to be involved in my Parish?
- e) Why do I want to celebrate my Quinceañera?

4. THE SACRAMENTS (ONLY FOR THE QUINCEAÑERA)

The pastor must offer the Quinceañera the opportunity to receive the sacrament of reconciliation one or two weeks prior to the celebration. The Quinceañera must participate in the Sunday Eucharist during her preparation time.

5. REHEARSAL AND IMMEDIATE PREPARATION

The pastor meets with the Quinceañera and her family to discuss the ritual and the details of the celebration. If needed, they may also make the necessary arrangements for a rehearsal with the Quinceañera, her family and other participants and ministers.

V. Liturgical Celebration

1. Place or context of the Quinceañera celebration:

The Quinceañera could be celebrated in the context of the celebration of Mass or during a Liturgy of the Word service.

The ordinary place for the celebration of the Quinceañera is the parish church. Any proposed exception must receive the approval of the Vicar General, which will be given only if the church is not available and with the pastor's approval.

2. Minister(s) for the Quinceañera celebration:

The ordinary minister of the celebration is the bishop, or the priest, or the deacon if celebrated outside of Mass. With the approval of the Archbishop, a lay person who is properly prepared and has received all the sacraments of initiation may celebrate a Quinceañera in the context of a Liturgy of the Word service.

Lectors, leader of intercessions, and altar servers should be practicing Catholics. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion *must* be practicing Catholics.

3. Rubrics for the Quinceañera celebration:

The rubrics and approved rite in both Spanish and English for the Quinceañera celebration within or outside of Mass may be found in the document, USCCB, 2008, *Bendición al Cumplir Quince Años*. Bilingual Edition. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: Washington, DC. This is the outline of the rite:

3.1. Rite of Quinceañera within Mass

a) Introductory Rite

Hymn

Greeting

Penitential Act

Collect

b) Liturgy of the Word

Readings

Homily

Renewal of Baptismal Promises

Act of Thanksgiving and Dedication (Offering of Flowers to Mary)

Blessing of appropriate gifts

Prayer of the Faithful

c) Liturgy of the Eucharist

d) Concluding Rite

Blessing of the Quinceañera

Final Blessing

Dismissal

Hymn

3.2. Rite of Quinceañera outside of Mass/Liturgy of the Word with Communion

a) Introductory Rite

Hymn

Greeting

Penitential Act

Opening Prayer

b) Liturgy of the Word

Readings

Homily

Renewal of Baptismal Promises

Act of Thanksgiving and Dedication (Offering of Flowers to Mary)

Blessing of appropriate gifts

Prayer of the Faithful

c) Rite of Communion

d) Concluding Rite

Blessing of the Quinceañera

Final Blessing

Dismissal

Hymn

4. Gifts given to the Quinceañera:

The Quinceañera celebration is a family event that celebrates life and traditions. Typically, the family and the *padrinos* of the Quinceañera present some gifts which are symbols of faith. These are the gifts permitted in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee:

- Flowers to be offered to the Blessed Virgin Mary. This gift is presented by the Quinceañera to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

- A medal with a religious/Catholic image or symbol.
- A Scapular.
- A Bible.
- A Rosary.

When needed, the pastor should arrange a table or an appropriate place for these gifts. The Altar should not be used for this purpose.

5. The dress or gown of the Quinceañera:

The Quinceañera should dress accordingly to her Christian dignity. Therefore, the dress should be a sign of modesty and prudence. This norm also applies to the dresses of the chamberlains and ladies.

6. Music:

Since the Quinceañera is a religious event, all musical selections are to be of a religious nature and consistent with the guidelines of the USCCB, “Sing to the Lord.”

7. Photography and Videography:

Photography and videography are allowed; however, they must be discreet and respectful of the church and not interfere with the flow of the ceremony.

VI. Resources

- Brankin, Patrick (Rev.). 2002. *Bilingual Ritual of Hispanic Popular Catholicism*, New Hope Publications: New Hope, KY.
- Gomez-Ruiz, Raul, SDS. 2010. *Quinceañeras: La Bendición al Cumplir Quince Años*. Libros Liguori: Liguori, MO.
- Perez-Rodriguez, Arturo. 1997. *Primero Dios: Hispanic Liturgical Resource*. Liturgical Training Publication: Chicago, IL
- [USCCB. 2008. *Bendición al Cumplir Quince Años*. Bilingual Edition. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: Washington, DC.](#)
- <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/sacraments-and-sacramentals/sacramentals-blessings/quinceanera/fifteen-questions-on-the-quinceanera.cfm>