

**DIOCESE OF SPRINGFIELD IN ILLINOIS  
JUNE 2018**

**Original Order of the Sacraments of Initiation Questions and Answers  
Quick Reference for Parish Receptionists**

**Why are we confirming young children?**

In 2017, as a result of our Fourth Diocesan Synod, Bishop Paprocki promulgated that our diocese would celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation in their original order (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist) and Confirmation at the age of reason, which in this diocese will normally be third grade. We would like to offer our young people the gift of the Holy Spirit that is given in a special way in the sacrament of Confirmation, as they grow up, not when they are nearly done growing up. In fact, the order of Baptism, Confirmation, and First Communion had been in place for almost 1900 of the Church's 2000 year history, so this is a restoration of what is actually the norm in all the official liturgical books.

**Are children ready to be confirmed in Grade 3?**

The Church believes they are just as ready to receive Confirmation as they are to receive First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion in Grade 2. What are some things the child has begun to understand about Holy Communion? (Examples: the priest asks the Holy Spirit to change the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus; I am receiving Jesus, not ordinary food; receiving Jesus helps me to be like him and to be one with him and his Body in his mission.) If your child is ready to be nourished by the Precious Body and Blood of Christ, your child is also ready to be confirmed. Confirmation is not a rite of passage to adulthood or about us confirming our faith in God. It is about God confirming his love for us as he does in Baptism. As a sacrament of initiation, Confirmation, received in its proper theological order (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist) opens the door to receive Holy Communion.

**Won't we lose our youth if they receive Confirmation so young?**

We certainly hope not. In fact, Bishop Paprocki has also required parishes to strengthen their religious education and youth ministry programs to keep our young people engaged and active in the Church as disciples and good stewards. Our parish has some wonderful programs for children and youth, and we are committed to making them even stronger. Moreover, for many parishes the only youth ministry was the Confirmation preparation program. Once it ended, the unintended message often was, "You have graduated and have all the formation you need in your faith." Yet we know that our formation in the faith and commitment to it is a life-long journey.

**Are other dioceses doing this?**

Yes, in the United States there are 13 dioceses celebrating the Sacraments of Initiation in their original order and Confirmation at the age of reason. More are considering doing this.

### **But isn't Confirmation a young person's affirmation of their Baptism?**

Yes, it is and we need to affirm our Baptism throughout our lives. But primarily, the Sacrament of Confirmation celebrates God's choice of us in Christ, not our choice. And with the grace of the Holy Spirit even very young children can be evangelizers, often bringing the joy of the Gospel to their parents and their peers.

### **What if my older child [Grades 3-12] also needs Confirmation and First Holy Communion?**

Your child can be prepared to receive both Confirmation and First Holy Communion at the same Mass. Some additional workshops may be required, but our Director of Religious Education or Coordinator of Youth Ministry can help you with this.

### **What if I feel my child is not ready?**

Many parents often have the same concerns about their children receiving First Holy Communion in the 2nd Grade, but almost always things work out fine with them receiving the sacraments. They will continue to learn about Confirmation after receiving it, just as they continue to learn about Baptism and the Eucharist after receiving them.

### **So when will this change happen?**

It will be implemented over a 7 year period beginning in 2019.

### **How will they be prepared? Will they have special classes?**

Children and young people will be prepared as part of their regular religious education classes. [There will also be special family retreats/workshops/sessions focused specifically on Confirmation throughout the year to supplement their formation and rehearse them for the celebration of the Sacrament.] Please check with your Director of Religious Education or Coordinator of Youth Ministry for details of the parish preparation program.

### **What if my child goes to a Catholic school?**

The school will provide the preparation for Confirmation through its regular religion classes. But the immediate preparation for Confirmation will be in the parish through family retreats/workshops/sessions focused specifically on Confirmation during the year to supplement their formation and to rehearse them for the celebration of the Sacrament.

### **What if our family cannot attend all the retreats/workshops/sessions?**

That would be something to discuss with our Director of Religious Education or Coordinator of Youth Ministry. I'm sure they would be happy to help find a way to accommodate your specific needs.

**What are the requirements to be a Sponsor?**

Sponsors must be:

Ordinarily at least 16 years old, but exceptions can be made

A fully initiated Catholic (They must have been baptized, confirmed, and received their First Holy Communion – copies of certificates are not required).

Practicing their Catholic faith (if they are married, they must have been married in a Catholic Church)

Willing to support the parents and this child in his/her spiritual life

**What if the Sponsor cannot be present at the Confirmation Mass?**

A proxy can represent the Sponsor at the Confirmation Mass.

**Can a parent serve as a proxy for the Sponsor?**

It is permissible for a parent to serve as a proxy, but not as a Sponsor.