

Fargo Confirmation Question & Answer

1. What is Confirmation?

Confirmation is the second of the three sacraments of Christian initiation. Confirmation is the completion of Baptism and the sacrament by which the baptized faithful are anointed with chrism by the laying on of hands. The grace received is the fullness of the Holy Spirit and his gifts. We also describe this fullness as the completion, strengthening, perfection or augmentation of the Holy Spirit received in Baptism.

2. What are the Sacraments of Initiation?

The sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist are so interrelated that all three are required for full Christian initiation. The Christian is born anew by Baptism, strengthened by Confirmation, and receives in the Eucharist the food of eternal life.

3. Who is the minister of the Sacrament of Confirmation?

The ordinary minister of Confirmation is the bishop. The bishop may designate other priests to confirm as well. In addition, pastors who baptize an adult or child of catechetical age are the ministers of Confirmation as required by the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA).

4. Who can receive the Sacrament of Confirmation?

Any baptized person who has not already received Confirmation. According to our diocesan policy, the normal age for Confirmation is immediately after the age of reason (usually around the age of seven).

5. Since the Church has not made it a unified practice, why is the Diocese of Fargo changing Confirmation?

Although dioceses across the United States have different approaches, it is of a higher priority to celebrate the sacrament as the Church intends. Increasing numbers of dioceses are considering reestablishing the ancient order of the sacraments and some have already done so. The bishop of each local church is to decide on the practice.

7. When our children are confirmed prior to First Eucharist, how are they to make an adult commitment to the church?

All sacraments are a gift from our Heavenly Father, who desires to give us His very life, which we call grace. Sacraments are not earned or merited. For this reason, Confirmation should not be perceived as the sacrament of adult commitment to the Church. In fact, the Church even requires priests to confirm infants and children younger than the age of reason when they are in danger of death so that they may receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit. An authentic mature commitment to Christ and the Church is expressed in full participation in the Eucharistic and apostolic life of the Church. It is not achieved at a single moment but throughout the life-long deepening of our intimacy with Christ. This begins in childhood and continues until death. Given our fallen condition, we must make a commitment to Christ every day.

6. Why should Confirmation be celebrated prior to First Eucharist?

Because this is the most ancient practice of the Church and it corresponds to a proper understanding of Confirmation as the perfection of baptismal grace and preparation for the reception of Christ in the Eucharist.

8. How can a young child be expected to know everything about the Faith?

Religious education or catechesis is a lifelong process. Adults should regularly study the Faith, read the Scriptures, participate in the sacraments and practice charity. Kindergarten to seniors in high school are expected to attend WEEKLY catechesis classes. With this in mind, Confirmation preparation is simply an explanation of the sacrament itself in the context of an active family faith life and parish catechesis similar to what took place for First Confession and First Eucharist.

9. Will the Bishop still be able to confirm my child?

The bishop intends to celebrate all Confirmations as he is the ordinary minister of the sacrament. In addition, children will be receiving their First Communion from the bishop at the same celebration.

10. Why change the grades and disrupt all of our schedules?

The importance of celebrating the sacraments as the Church intends requires this change. More importantly, each child will receive the much-needed grace God intends for them.

11. How can I keep my child in religious education if he/she is confirmed so early in life?

Confirmation has often been misunderstood and treated as graduation from learning about the faith. This is neither the true meaning of the sacrament nor the intention of the Church. Growth in the understanding and living out of our faith is the result of a life-long effort. Parents and siblings have the first responsibility of being an example of Jesus Christ to each other and living the Gospel each day. Children will stay in religious education if they see their parents striving to grow in holiness through family prayer, Scripture reading, Sunday Mass, regular confession, and living a life of charity. Parents are to keep their children in religious education programs just as they keep their child in school until graduation.

12. Does removing Confirmation from the context of a junior high or high school program miss an opportunity for a much-needed ministry to our youth at a time when they are looking for recognition and a sense of belonging?

The preparation for and celebration of Confirmation should not be used simply as a means to an end, however noble. The parish is to develop a proper youth ministry which attends to the spiritual needs of our youth and can be based upon a deepening of the sacramental graces received in the sacraments of Christian initiation. Parents, being the first teachers of their children, have the responsibility to educate their children throughout high school, in all areas including the Faith. Parents are to keep their children in religious education programs just as they keep their child in school until graduation.

13. Are there textbooks for Confirmation at this age? What will we use to teach?

New textbooks are being sought out which will correspond to the teaching of the sacraments in the order of Christian initiation at the elementary level.

14. If the Bishop doesn't come for Confirmation, will he ever come?

The bishop's intention is to visit all the parishes of the diocese every three years at the regular Sunday liturgy. These parish visitations are best when Confirmation is not celebrated at the same time so that he may visit with a larger percentage of the parish and local community.

15. Our children grew up in this parish. Why would I want to have them confirmed in a "regional parish" instead of our own? Is this the first step in closing the parish?

The reason for having regional Confirmations is to make it possible for the bishop to celebrate Confirmations throughout the diocese without putting an unreasonable burden upon his schedule. At present there are 158 parishes in the diocese. More importantly, regional celebrations help us to recognize and experience the diocesan Church and our relationship of unity with one another as Catholics. Furthermore, each parish on the Sunday following the regional celebration is asked to have a parish celebration with their pastor. The issue of parish closures is unrelated to the idea of regional Confirmations.

16. Why do we have to change the First Communion age as well?

Since Confirmation is being moved prior to First Communion, children would have to be prepared to receive three sacraments in one year. Since this is impractical, Confirmation and the Eucharist are best received in the following year.

17. Why are we now doing Confirmation and First Communion together? Children are being deprived of a special day. When I was growing up I got a special day for each sacrament.

Unlike other special days, such as birthdays and anniversaries, the sacraments are a gift from our Heavenly Father, who desires to give us His very life, which we call grace. The sacraments are not earned or merited. Once children reach the age of discretion, they have the right and duty to complete their Christian initiation begun by their parents in Baptism. These children, who are already reborn as a child of God, have the right to be strengthened in Confirmation and nourished by Jesus Himself in the Eucharist in order to continue to grow in their life of holiness. This celebration is like the celebration of initiation for all adults and children of catechetical age who are baptized or received into the Church. These people receive all three sacraments, Baptism, Confirmation, and First Eucharist at the Easter Vigil.

18. How will this move be made in only three years?

With careful planning the transition can be done in this time. For smaller parishes who already confirm several grades, the transition should be relatively simple. Possibly, several smaller parishes could confirm children together or have regional Confirmations to facilitate the transition. Larger parishes will need more careful planning. They may even need to rely upon multiple Confirmations in order to accommodate the numbers. The deans of each deanery along with the Department for Catholic Education will coordinate this process.