

PASTORAL LETTER

*TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD
OF EASTERN NORTHDAKOTA
ON THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION*



MOST REVEREND
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Bishop of Fargo
Feast of the Assumption
August 15, 2002



*“Et ego rogabo Patrem, et alium paraclitum dabit vobis,
ut maneat vobiscum in aeternum, Spiritum veritatis . . .” (Jn 14:15)*
“I will ask the Father and he will give you another Paraclete to be with you always,
the Spirit of truth . . .”

I. Introduction

1. To the people of God of Eastern North Dakota and to all persons of good will: Greetings in the Lord Jesus Christ!

In the Gospel of Saint John, our Lord promised his disciples that he would pray to the Father so that he would send them “another helper,” the “Spirit of truth” who would remain with them forever (Jn 14:17, cf. Jn 15:26, 16:13). This promise finds expression in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Letters of the New Testament wherever a special gesture of the Spirit’s gift accompanies or follows Baptism. The grace of Baptism begins the journey of incorporation into the mystery of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. But the disciple of Christ also needs to be strengthened by the fullness of the Spirit’s gifts. This second outpouring augments the original gift of the Spirit received in Baptism. We can never forget that the principal outpouring of the Spirit is in Baptism, and that Confirmation deepens and strengthens this initial gift.

2. Since apostolic times, the Sacrament of Confirmation has been seen as the second sacrament of Christian initiation. Indeed, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* describes Confirmation as completing the grace of Baptism (*CCC 1285 inter alia*). In ancient practice, the Church celebrated these three sacraments in this unified order -- Baptism, Confirmation, and First Eucharist. In more recent times, Confirmation has occurred at a later time, after Baptism and First Eucharist.
3. Over the past few decades, much discussion has occurred among bishops, clergy, and lay faithful regarding the proper placement of Confirmation in parish practice. In part, this discussion has been fueled by the great variety in the timing, preparation, and celebration of Confirmation across the United States, as well as the revision of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)*, which calls for the reception of Baptism, Confirmation and First Eucharist in one rite after the age of seven.
4. This variety is present also here in the Diocese of Fargo. Significant pastoral advantage and benefit, however, exist in having a unified diocesan approach in the preparation and celebration of this sacrament. For this reason, in recent months, I have sought the advice of the priests and catechists of the diocese and most have expressed a desire for a common practice of Confirmation in our local Church.
5. Important to the development of a common practice of Confirmation is the understanding of both the history and the theology of the sacrament. The next two sections will briefly reflect on these two themes, precedent to the statement of the Confirmation policy for the Diocese of Fargo.



II. Confirmation: understanding the past¹



6. Understanding our past often helps us better understand the needs of the present. From the apostolic times until around the fifth century, the Church celebrated the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation in one continuous rite of initiation, which culminated in a Christian's admission to the Eucharist. This practice held for persons of all ages, including children. The Baptismal washing and anointing by the priest were followed by an imposition of hands and anointing by the bishop. Confirmation was seen as a natural extension of Baptism, perfecting what the Holy Spirit had accomplished in that initial sacrament. Hence, the celebration was called the double sacrament of initiation, while still two distinct sacraments (Cf. CCC 1290-1291).
7. In the Middle Ages (5th-13th centuries), the distinction between Baptism and Confirmation grew. Due to a growing emphasis on infant Baptism and the territorial enlargement of dioceses, it became increasingly difficult for the bishop to be present to administer Confirmation in a unified rite of initiation. As a result, Baptism and First Eucharist were administered together at infancy, with a later celebration of Confirmation by the Bishop in very early childhood. As the centuries progressed, however, infant Eucharist in the West ceased, with the effect of further neglecting Confirmation. The dominant idea of Confirmation as an intensification of Baptism was supplemented with the notion of strengthening the Christian for the battle of life through the fullness of the gift of the Holy Spirit.
8. From the thirteenth until the nineteenth century, a further change occurred in the celebration of Confirmation. Although infant Baptism continued to be the norm, First Eucharist was delayed until after the age of discretion. Thus, the ancient order of the three sacraments was restored but spread out in time. Confirmation was celebrated at the age of discretion (seven and above), followed by First Eucharist between the ages of ten and fourteen. By the sixteenth century, Confirmation was celebrated between seven and fifteen years of age, followed by First Eucharist. At the close of the nineteenth century, the order of Confirmation before First Eucharist received papal approval.
9. The contemporary sequence of the sacraments was determined in part by Pope Pius X, who encouraged First Eucharist at the age of discretion (seven and above). This decision had the effect of placing the reception of First Eucharist before the reception of Confirmation, which would then generally occur as early as seven and as late as eighteen. This order (infant Baptism, First Eucharist at the age of discretion, and Confirmation any time between seven and eighteen) is the more common pastoral practice of today.
10. At the same time, various Church documents, especially the Vatican II document *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC 71) and the rituals which followed it (Pope Paul VI, *Apostolic Constitution on the Sacrament of Confirmation*), clearly teach that the purpose of the liturgical reform of Confirmation is to restore the intimate link Confirmation has with the whole of Christian initiation. In order for that link to be clearly established, the proper and desired order of the sacraments is that of the ancient Church: Baptism, Confirmation, and First Eucharist.



III. Confirmation: understanding the theology

11. The New Testament reveals that the whole life and mission of Jesus Christ is lived out in total communion with the presence of the Holy Spirit. The descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus at his Baptism is the sign of his anointing as Messiah. Jesus promises to send the Spirit upon the apostles once he has completed his mission, a promise fulfilled both on Easter Sunday (Jn 20, 22) and on Pentecost (Acts 2, 1-4). As Christ is filled with the Holy Spirit, those who are incorporated into his Body are also filled with that same Spirit. All those who believed the apostolic preaching and sought Baptism also received this outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The imposition of hands by the apostles, the origin of the Sacrament of Confirmation, became the sacramental means whereby the apostles and their successors transmitted this great gift of the Holy Spirit. Very early on, however, the anointing with chrism was added to this imposition of hands to better signify the “sealing” by the Holy Spirit. The very name “Christian” evokes the messianic anointing in Christ.
12. The foundational sacrament of Christian initiation is Baptism, which is the door to the whole of the sacramental order and Christian life. Confirmation deepens the grace received in Baptism; it completes and perfects it. The Eucharist is the summit of Christian initiation and the center of the sacramental life of the Church. Confirmation is ordered to the Eucharist and prepares the Christian to receive and be transformed by the Body and Blood of Christ more fully.
13. The sacred chrism which is used for the anointing in Confirmation is consecrated by the bishop at the Chrism Mass. The liturgy of Confirmation begins with the instruction of the candidates and the renewal of their Baptismal promises, followed by the bishop extending his hands over the confirmands invoking the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. By the laying on of hands, he then anoints the forehead (Latin rite) with the sacred chrism by the laying on of hands and saying the words “*Accipe signaculum doni Spiritus Sancti*” (“Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit”). These words and actions constitute the essential element of the rite of Confirmation. The sign of peace, a sign of ecclesial communion, concludes the rite (Cf. **CIC** 880, **RC** 22-27, **CCC** 1298-1301).
14. The anointing of Confirmation is rich in symbolic meaning, principally signifying the consecration of the confirmand to Christ. By that anointing, the follower of Jesus receives the seal of the Holy Spirit, an indelible spiritual mark. The mark or “character” signifies one who belongs totally to Christ and perfects the common priesthood of the faithful so that the confirmed person can profess faith in Christ publicly (**CCC** 1304-1305).
15. The most evident effect of the sacrament is the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the disciple. This gift of the fullness of the Holy Spirit deepens and perfects the grace of Baptism in several ways:
 - through a deeper rooting in divine filiation, as an adopted son or daughter of God
 - through a more firm union with Christ
 - through an increase in the gifts of the Holy Spirit
 - through a more perfect bond with the Church
 - through a special grace to spread and defend the Faith in word and action as a true witness of Christ (**CCC** 1302-1303)With these graces, the disciple of Christ is more fully prepared to receive his Body and Blood, thereby completing initiation into the mystery of Christ and his Church.

16. The perfection of baptismal grace found in the Sacrament of Confirmation is not dependent upon age or knowledge of the confirmand. The grace that is conferred is a free gift and “does not need ratification to become effective” (Cf. CCC 1308). The common practice of high school or middle school reception of Confirmation could give the impression that somehow the sacrament is merited by virtue of age or training. In truth, the Sacrament of Confirmation is an effective vehicle of grace at any age as long as it is validly conferred. Thus, those that receive the sacrament are able to reap its benefits from the moment of reception. The invisible benefits of this sacrament conferred at a young age could be of great benefit to young people as they grow toward adolescence and young adulthood.
17. After reflecting upon the history and theology of the Sacrament of Confirmation, as well as upon the results of our diocesan discussions, I have decided, as your bishop, to institute a unified diocesan policy regarding the preparation and celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation, which I outline in the remainder of this pastoral letter.



IV. Policy

18. In the Diocese of Fargo, all baptized persons should be appropriately prepared for and receive the Sacrament of Confirmation before the first reception of the Holy Eucharist. This norm is effective immediately. Of course, a transition period will be necessary for most of our parishes, especially those with greater numbers of confirmands. With the assistance of the deans, pastors, directors of religious education, and the diocesan staff, I will do all that I can to assist each parish in adopting this policy as smoothly as possible.
19. While I ask that the implementation be done as soon as possible, all deaneries should have a plan in place by the fall of 2003. The following timeline is to be followed:
 - a) Pastors will preach on the pastoral letter during the Sunday Masses of September 8 and 15 of 2002.
 - b) Deans will meet with the priests of their deaneries during the Fall of 2002 through the Spring of 2003 in order to develop a plan for the implementation of the policy. This plan should also include a timeline for the Confirmation of all those who enter the third grade and above in the Fall of 2003. The Confirmation of these children should take place by the end of 2005.
 - c) Beginning the Fall of 2003, all second graders in the diocese will be prepared for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
 - d) Beginning the Fall of 2004, all third graders will be prepared for the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation and First Eucharist. The reception of the sacraments will take place in the Spring of 2005.
20. Many may wonder how the existing religious education programs will be affected by this change. The Church asks each of us, no matter what our age or condition, to grow in our faith throughout our lives. This will entail, therefore, that formal catechesis be given on an ongoing basis both to adults, as well as to all those of school age. Parents have the responsibility to ensure that their children participate in religious education programs from Kindergarten through twelfth grade, either by attending our Catholic schools or participating in religious education programs offered

through the local parish. Pastors are to ensure that a vital program exists in their parish for all levels, Kindergarten through twelfth grade.

21. The following sections pertain to persons involved in Confirmation preparation, immediate preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation, the celebration of Confirmation and First Eucharist, and finally will set guidelines for particular situations.



V. Persons involved in Confirmation preparation



22. **All baptized Catholics** are responsible for the evangelization and catechetical formation of the entire world. The world needs the baptized to be witnesses of Jesus Christ both in word and deed, so that all peoples may be put “not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy with Jesus Christ” (CT 5, cf. CCC 900, RCIA, Introduction 9). The life of each one of the faithful needs to be transformed so that they learn “more and more within the Church to think like him [Christ], to judge like him, to act in conformity with his commandments, and to hope as he invites us to” (CT 20). This transformation into living images of Christ will enable the faithful to be true witnesses. In regard to minor children (those who are not yet eighteen), preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation requires a greater role on the part of the adult faithful.
23. Although the child has reached the age of reason and is capable to be a disciple and witness of Jesus, **parents** must assist their child in the life of holiness. The initiation of children into the sacramental life of the Church is primarily the responsibility and concern of parents (CIC 890, RC 3).
24. Parents are the first teachers of their children in the ways of faith. In Baptism, parents accept the responsibility of training their children in the practice of the Faith and to make it “their constant care.” As stated in the *Rite of Baptism* (n. 120), parents are to see that “the divine life which God gives them [their children] is kept safe from the poison of sin, to grow always stronger in their hearts.”
25. **Brothers and sisters** of the child share in this responsibility of handing on the Faith. Siblings, especially those who have been fully initiated, assist the parents by their example. This family catechesis precedes, accompanies and enriches all other catechesis (CT 68).
26. The entire family is to deliver the Gospel to each other daily in word and deed, filled with love and respect: “For this reason the family home is rightly called the domestic church, a community of grace and prayer, a school of human virtues and of Christian charity” (CCC 1666). The family is nothing less than a sign and image of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Trinity, for our unbelieving world (CCC 2205). Active participation in the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist, regular Reconciliation, daily family prayer and Scripture reading enable families to live the Gospel life of Jesus Christ.
27. Every candidate should have a Confirmation **sponsor**. It is desirable that godparents take on this role to express the increase and deepening of Baptism. In the Baptism of infants, godparents represent both the expanded spiritual family of the one to be baptized and the role of the Church as

mother. As occasion offers, godparents help the parents so that children will come to profess the Faith and live up to it (cf. **RCIA**, General Introduction 8).

28. Sponsors fulfill similar responsibilities, especially with the confirming of minor children. In addition, at the time of the Rite of Confirmation, sponsors testify to the faith of the candidate (**RCIA**, General Introduction 9-10). Parish priests are to see that the sponsors are spiritually fit and meet the following qualifications (**RC** 5-6; cf. **CIC** 874, 892-893, **CCC** 1311, **RCIA**, General Introduction 10.2):
 - must be sixteen years old
 - may not be the natural or adoptive parents of the confirmand
 - must be fully initiated into the Catholic Faith (Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist)
 - must be leading a life in harmony with the Faith
 - must be free of any canonical impediment
29. After Confirmation, sponsors, along with the parents and siblings, should continue to assist the child:
 - in leading a sacramental life and growing in a life of prayer
 - in assuming the role of disciple as a faithful follower and in being a witness to Christ in every situation
 - in sustaining the candidates in moments of hesitancy and anxiety
30. **Bishops**, beyond all others, are primarily responsible for evangelization and catechesis. As the chief stewards of the mysteries of God, they are to foster active and effective catechesis, that is, to put people not only in touch but in intimacy with Jesus Christ, “to yield to no other care whatever in any way” (**CIC** 835, **CT** 5, 63, **RCIA**, General Introduction 12).
31. Bishops are the ordinary ministers of Confirmation. By the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the apostles, the first bishops, were filled with the Holy Spirit, and they, in their turn, gave the Holy Spirit to the faithful through the laying on of hands (cf. **CIC** 882, **CCC** 1312-1313, **RC** 7).
32. “**Pastors** of souls and other members of the Christian faithful, according to their respective ecclesiastical function, have the duty to take care that those who seek the sacraments are prepared to receive them by proper evangelization and catechetical instruction, attentive to the norms issued by competent authority” (**CIC** 843 § 2).
33. **Priests** are to “devote their best efforts” to catechesis (**CT** 64). They have the duty of preparing the parents, sponsors and children through catechetical, liturgical and pastoral means. The pastor must be both an evangelizer and catechist, acting in accord with diocesan policy and working with the Department for Catholic Education & Formation. He must establish a complete evangelization process and catechetical formation program. These should include:
 - providing for the sacramental lives of the faithful
 - supporting parents as the first evangelizers and catechists of their children
 - training others to be evangelizers and catechists for the parish
 - providing supplies, equipment and facilities for catechesis
 - enabling the entire community to live out their roles

In addition, with regard to the preparation of minor children for reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation, a parish priest should:

- see that the sponsors are spiritually fit and meet the specified qualifications
- assure an interview for each child to assess their readiness and intention
- provide the Sacrament of Reconciliation for candidates, sponsors and parents as near to the celebration of Confirmation as possible
- provide for the liturgical needs at the celebration of the sacrament

34. **Catechists**, under the guidance of the pastor, are delegated to do the work of evangelization and catechesis. They are co-workers of the Gospel. Catechists formally prepare candidates for the reception of Confirmation and assist the parents, sponsors, priests and entire parish in carrying out their previously specified roles. Without catechists, these roles may be neglected or forgotten entirely.

35. At present, the **parish** is the pre-eminent place for catechesis (CT 67). Family catechesis should be extended within this broader Christian home, the community of the faithful. Before, during and after the candidates' preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation every parishioner should work to create:

- a community leading a sacramental life and growing in a life of prayer
- a community demonstrating the role of disciple and witness to Christ in every situation
- a community willing to sustain one another in moments of hesitancy and anxiety
- a community that is welcoming, where the Gospel is lived with joy



VI. Preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation

36. Preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation begins immediately after the infant is baptized. Parents and older siblings provide this formation by their participation in the sacraments, through daily prayer, and by their example of the everyday living of the Gospel filled with love and respect. Through this family witness, very young children will see their call to a living relationship with a loving God.

37. For a child of the age of discretion to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation (seven and above), the following requirements are to be observed in accord with the norms of universal Church law (Acts 1, 14; CIC 889, CCC 1310 and 1319):

- must be baptized and not previously confirmed
- must be Catholic (children baptized in another church must make a profession of faith, be received into the Church, be confirmed and receive First Eucharist, and have this event recorded in the Baptismal registry)
- must be in the state of grace
- must be prepared for and celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- must have the intention of receiving the sacrament
- must be properly instructed
- must be capable of renewing the Baptismal promises

- must be prepared to assume the role of disciple and witness to Christ
- must have a more intense prayer life to prepare to receive the strength and graces of the Holy Spirit

38. When the child reaches the age of kindergarten, parents should enroll the child in parish catechetical programs in the Catholic school or in the parish religious education program, or they should begin a systematic catechesis at home. At this point, children should have begun:
- to attend weekly catechetical sessions from September to May, (applicable only to those not enrolled in the Catholic school system)
 - to attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation, accompanied by their parents and siblings
 - to continue memorization of prayers such as the Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, Mass parts, etc.
 - to develop a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and His family, the Church
39. "Preparation for Confirmation should aim at leading the Christian toward a more intimate union with Christ and a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit -- his actions, his gifts and his biddings -- in order to be more capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities of Christian life. To this end catechesis for Confirmation should strive to awaken a sense of belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ, the universal Church as well as the parish community" (CCC 1309).
40. Given that the first celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation must be celebrated before Confirmation and First Eucharist, a 3-5 hour "retreat" should be planned for parents and their children, to prepare them to receive God's mercy. This retreat is intended to be a time to study the Church's teachings on Reconciliation in language suited to the children's age level. Furthermore, there must be a time of prayer and practice for their first celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This sacrament is to be received by the child during second grade.
41. Similarly, retreats should be planned for parents, children, and sponsors in preparation for the Sacraments of Confirmation and First Eucharist. These retreats, during the third grade, are intended to be a time to study the Church's teachings on Confirmation and the Eucharist in language suited to the children's age level. A time of prayer and practice for the liturgy should be included in these retreats.
42. According to the custom of the Church, those to be confirmed may take another Christian name ("Confirmation name") at the time they receive this sacrament. The name must be that of a biblical, beatified or canonized person, as recognized by the Church. In this case, children should be familiar with the saint/blessed whom they are choosing as a new patron and be able to articulate how the saint was a faithful witness to Christ. This may be done orally. A confirmand may, of course, be confirmed under his or her own Baptismal name.
43. As a part of the preparation for the sacraments for the respective children who have not been baptized at the parish preparing them for Confirmation, parents must provide the local pastor with a recent copy (within the last 6 months) of their child's Baptismal certificate as soon as possible. Children are not to be confirmed without proof of Baptism.

44. As indicated above (nos. 25-27), every child is to have one sponsor, ideally one who served at the time of Baptism. Sponsors should be actively involved in the child's life of faith before, during, and after Confirmation.
45. Prior to the celebration of the Confirmation, the confirmands' parish priest or designated catechist should interview each child to assess his or her readiness and intention for receiving the sacrament.
46. The pastor of those to be confirmed should lead the entire parish in regular prayer for the confirmands. If the number of confirmands is not excessive, the parish may even offer public prayer for them by name. In some cases, pastors have chosen "prayer partners" for each candidate. These "prayer partners" anonymously pray for the candidate throughout the preparation time, revealing their identity to the confirmand after the celebration of the sacrament. In the Diocese of Fargo, the praiseworthy custom of a parish novena to the Holy Spirit in the days immediately preceding the Confirmation liturgy has been encouraged for many years. Formularies for this novena are normally sent to parishes sometime prior to the celebration.
47. A parish may add other requirements or celebrations to the preparation period for the Sacraments of Confirmation and First Eucharist, as long as these requirements do not hinder the rights of the candidates to receive the sacrament:
- Families may be asked to take a more active role in the confirmands' preparation, possibly including:
 - daily family prayer time
 - family service projects
 - family attendance at the annual Chrism Mass
 - The pastor may choose to begin the candidates' immediate preparation with a "rite of enrollment" such as the "Rite of Welcome" found in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (nos. 416-433). The signing of the senses and presentation of the Scriptures may be particularly helpful in understanding the role of the disciple and witness of Christ.



VII. Celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation



48. In the Diocese of Fargo the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation is reserved to the bishop, in accord with canonical and liturgical norms, except as determined by Church law and diocesan policy (see below).
49. In order to maintain the identity of the bishop as celebrant of Confirmation, I ask the deans of the diocese to arrange for regional celebrations of the sacrament in their particular deanery. In the next nine months, each dean is to meet with the priests and directors of religious education in his deanery, in order to recommend to the bishop a place and time for the celebration of the Sacraments of Confirmation and First Eucharist. Through such an effort, our people will be able to enjoy a fuller liturgical celebration of the sacrament, as well as gain a deeper sense of the unity of the diocesan church. Specifically, I ask that ceremonies be scheduled for no fewer than thirty confirmands at any given time, unless local conditions render this requirement unworkable.

50. Moreover, it is desirable that these celebrations occur outside of the time normally set aside for the Sunday liturgy, so that weekends are free for the bishop to carry out meaningful visitations to local parish communities on a systematic basis.
51. On the Sunday immediately following the regional celebration of the Sacraments of Confirmation and First Eucharist, each parish will have a special parish celebration for their children.
52. The Sacrament of Confirmation is to be conferred on the faithful at about the age of discretion (**CIC 891**), after the reception of Baptism and before the reception of First Eucharist. This will entail the following sequence for the sacraments:
- 2nd grade Preparation for and reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation; children are to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation immediately preceding the celebration of Confirmation and First Eucharist.
- 3rd grade Preparation for and reception of Confirmation, followed by First Eucharist at the same Mass. The normal time for the celebration of these sacraments will be during the Easter Season of each year. A set time will be established for the various deaneries.



VIII. Particular Situations



53. By universal Church law, pastors and parish priests are to confirm the baptized, without previous authorization of the local bishop, in the following circumstances:
- all those in danger of death, including infants* (**CIC 883 § 3**)
 - * It should be noted that infants and all those below the age of discretion are never recipients of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick (**CIC 1004-1005**).
 - all those adults, including uncatechized Catholics or those members of another Christian community, who have been properly prepared catechetically, liturgically, and pastorally and are fully initiated at the solemn vigil of Easter (**CIC 883 § 2, RCIA 75**)
 - all those children, either baptized in another Christian community or unbaptized, who have reached catechetical age (seven years and above) and are fully initiated at the solemn vigil of Easter (**RCIA 256, National Statutes for the Catechumenate 18**)
54. By particular law for the Diocese of Fargo, pastors and parish priests are permitted to confirm the baptized, without previous authorization of the local bishop, in the following circumstances:
- all those non-catechized Catholic adults, after a suitable period of formal instruction (**RCIA, National Statutes 25-29**)
 - all those adults who were baptized as members of another Christian community, who have undergone a suitable period of formal catechetical instruction, and are received into the Church by some official act outside of the Easter Vigil (**RCIA, National Statutes 30-37**)
 - all those Catholic adults preparing for the Sacrament of Marriage who are not confirmed and freely petition for the Sacrament of Confirmation, recalling that Confirmation, strictly speaking, is not a requirement for marriage (**CIC 1065 §1**)



IX. Conclusion

55. The sacraments are a rich gift given to us by our Savior as a means of transmitting the divine life to us. The many challenges of restoring the ancient order of the sacraments of Christian initiation will be more than rewarded by the many fruits of grace. I hope by this policy that the true place of the Eucharist as the summit of that initiation and the source of all Church life will be more fully recognized in our diocesan family. Please study this policy carefully, as well as the references on the Sacrament of Confirmation in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* .
56. On this feast of the Assumption of Mary, I pray that the Holy Spirit, who overshadowed Mary in her *fiat* so that the Word was made flesh in her womb, may guide this change in our diocese. As the Holy Spirit has filled the hearts of the followers of Jesus Christ throughout the centuries, so too may His gifts be enkindled in the hearts of each Catholic in the Church of Fargo. As on the first Pentecost, when the tongues of fire of the Holy Spirit fell upon the apostles and our Blessed Mother, so may this same fire fall upon the Church of Fargo. Through the intercession of Mary and the Apostles, may each of us become a more faithful witness to Jesus Christ and proclaim His Good News to all peoples living in Eastern North Dakota.

Given in Fargo, on August 15, the Solemnity of the Assumption, in the year 2002.

Your brother in Christ,

Most Rev. Samuel J. Aquila, D.D.
Bishop of Fargo



Abbreviations

CCC	Catechism of the Catholic Church
CIC	Codex Iuris Canonici (Code of Canon Law)
CT	Pope John Paul II, <i>Catechesi Tradendae</i> (On Catechesis in Our Time)
RC	Rite of Confirmation
RCIA	Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults
SC	Vatican II, <i>Sacrosanctum Concilium</i> (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy)

(Footnotes)

¹ For the following historical section, cf. R. Cabié, “Christian Initiation,” in A.G. Martimort, *The Church at Prayer*, Vol. III, Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN, 1988.