

Bishop Vincke's Letter on Restored Order

Celebrating the Sacrament of Confirmation is one of my favorite things to do as a bishop. I love meeting the students, their sponsors, and the parents and grandparents too.

As I journeyed throughout the diocese, I found that parishes across the diocese had different ages for the Sacrament of Confirmation. Several years ago, I asked Fr. Frank Coady what grade did he think candidates should be for the Sacrament of Confirmation. He replied, "I think we should use the restored order?" The restored order is having Baptism first, followed by the Sacrament of Confirmation, and then the Sacrament of the Eucharist. This is how the Church designed it. These three Sacraments are the Initiation Sacraments, with the Eucharist being the final Sacrament as we enter fully into the Church.

Shortly thereafter, I asked Corey Lyon, our chancellor, at what age/grade do you recommend for our diocese for the Sacrament of Confirmation. He replied, "I think we should follow the restored order." I even found out that Corey wrote a paper many years ago in support of the restored order.

Finally, Deacon Bill Meagher, who was studying to be a deacon at the time, attended a class on the Liturgy. He came into my office saying, "Bishop, I think we should use the restored order." Hmm. Shortly thereafter, I asked them to form a committee to study the restored order. They met with priests, deacons, DREs, and many other people. After a couple of years of discerning and listening, I decided that our Sacramental Formation will use the restored order. This means the normal way is to receive the Sacrament of Baptism as a baby, then followed by receiving the Sacraments of Confirmation and the Eucharist at the same Mass sometime in 3rd grade.

I am excited about this new preparation and reception of the Sacraments of Initiation in our diocese. We are joining more and more dioceses around the country that are doing the same.

One of the reasons I decided to make the change is that Sacraments are the reception of grace. Sometimes, it felt like the Sacraments needed to be earned by doing this and that in order to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. We don't earn the Sacraments, we simply receive them.

I also want to share that the one concern many people have is that they are afraid that people will stop going to Mass after 3rd grade. They might, but it's not what God desires for them. Two thoughts on this: parents are and will always be the primary educators of the faith to their children. Not attending Mass after receiving the Sacraments of Initiation in 3rd grade is the opposite of what God is calling each of us. I also think that in middle and high school, we can offer many other opportunities to live out the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist through discernment of vocations, serving the poor, Bible studies, etc.

Please pray for our diocese in this endeavor.