



Special Edition

The Following is a Special Announcement from Bishop Luis Zarama Sent to the Priests of the Diocese 6-8-22

My Brother Priests,

During my five years as bishop of the Diocese of Raleigh, I have experienced over 200 celebrations of the Sacrament of Confirmation among the parishes of the Diocese. These occasions continue to be a high point of my ministry as a bishop and a joyous and vibrant experience of the life of the parishes of this diocese I have come to love. I commend you, your catechists, and the parents and guardians of the children of your parish for the wonderful work you are accomplishing in bringing our young people to a deeper appreciation for the gift of faith.

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to draw us ever deeper into the wisdom of what it means to believe and so I would like to draw your attention to two concerns that I have noticed at times when I have celebrated the sacrament with your parishes.

My first concern is a matter of the age for reception. In some parishes there appears to be a wide gap among the candidates. Some candidates may be in the last years of elementary school, seventh or eighth grade, while others are in ninth or tenth grade. At times this gap has appeared in a single celebration of the sacrament. I realize that the scope of catechesis for a seventh and a tenth grader is not the same, and I wonder if a disservice to our young people is unintentionally being fostered by such a wide gap in the age for reception.

My second concern is more a concern of the heart for our young people receiving the sacrament. There have been parishes where the candidates have been engaged and responsive in the celebration of the liturgy, especially in the recommitment to their baptismal promises. In other parishes, the celebration has been a bit too mechanical, with little engagement from candidates. In these settings the response of our young people made me wonder if they truly understood, or cared about, what they were receiving.

Because of these concerns, I am asking that preparation for and celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation be directed toward and take place in 10th grade. I realize that this may be a shift in practice for some parishes, but it is my hope that this shift will allow for even better catechesis to our young people and enable them

to begin asking those questions that will allow faith to take a deeper root in their lives.

This shift would begin for all young people who will enter new programs for the sacrament beginning in the fall. Any young person already in a sacramental process for Confirmation will remain in the process, being confirmed at the age the original process intended. This may lead to a gap in the celebration of the sacrament in some parishes for two or three years, and this is to be expected.

All decisions within our Church need to heed the voice of the Holy Spirit, or else they will not bear the fruit they should. In order to move forward, I have asked Fr. Jimmy Magee and Fr. Jim Sabak, OFM to form a committee to look at the greater impact and experience of the Sacrament of Confirmation on our diocese. This committee, to be made up of catechists, parents, and clergy, will examine the role that the sacrament can and must play in our lives as believers, and what other adjustments or corrections can help to foster acknowledging and receiving the Spirit's presence among us.

Future adjustments may be made to these decisions, all ordered to the best possible experience of a sacrament that is meant to enrich and delight us in bearing witness to what we believe. I ask for your patience and your care as we move forward. May the grace of the Holy Spirit grant us the wisdom and courage to respond with all our hearts.

In Christ,
† Luis Rafael Zarama, J.C.L.
Bishop of Raleigh