

THE PASTOR'S CORNER

A PRIMER ON RESTORED ORDER: History of the Age of Confirmation

A PART FROM JESUS' COMMAND to his Apostles to go forth and baptize all nations in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and his gift of the Eucharist at the Last Supper, the establishment of the other sacraments and their provenance may not always seem clear. By scriptural references and the practice of the Church from her beginnings, Confirmation, Matrimony, Reconciliation, Sacred Orders, and the Anointing of the Sick are understood, nevertheless, to have been handed on by Christ.

This is certainly evident in the development of her understanding about the laying on of hands and prayer that we've come to identify as the earliest citation of Confirmation. Appearing in the Acts of the Apostles (8:14-17), St. Luke recounts when Peter and John were sent to Samaria, they realized that those had been baptized in the name of Jesus Christ has not received the Holy Spirit as they had at Pentecost. Laying hands upon them, and praying, they conferred the same fruits the Apostles had received at Pentecost. St. Paul, as well, newly meeting disciples in Ephesus while on his third missionary journey, found that they had only been baptized with that of John the Baptist, but had not received the Holy Spirit. Paul, St. Luke writes, laid his hands upon them and they likewise began to speak in tongues and prophesy (Acts 19:1-7).

The Letter to the Hebrews (chapter 6) suggests an early practice of the Sacraments of Initiation separately administered but closely linked when the writer refers to a "laying on of hands" after baptism and coming before new Christians have "tasted the heavenly gift" (the Eucharist). This practice of celebrating one

continuous rite of initiation (Baptism and Confirmation) leading to full communion in Christ in the Eucharist has been the practice of the Eastern Christianity to this day and is seen in the Catholic Church's practice of the Rite of Christian for Adults that is normally celebrated at the Easter Vigil.

As the Church quickly spread throughout the Roman Empire from the fifth century AD, it became impractical for a bishop to participate in the initiation of every Christian in a timely manner. Baptisms were celebrated by the parish priest and Confirmation and Communion were put off until the bishop could visit the parish and administer Confirmation and Eucharist to every baptized child. This led to a separation of the Rites of Initiation thus obscuring the intrinsic connection between Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist. After a while, infants were no longer given Holy Communion and Confirmation was neglected.

During the Middle Ages, children were confirmed at the age of reason, approximately seven or eight years old, but did not receive First Communion until the age of 11 or 12. While the order of the sacraments had been restored to its ancient practice, Communion was delayed much too long after Confirmation which was strongly oriented toward it.

It was not until the 1700s in France that Confirmation was deliberately placed after First Holy Communion as a condition of proper instruction (rather than a bishop's ability to get to every parish). When the Bishop of Toulouse, seeking to return to the ancient order, sought the advice of Pope Leo XIII, the pontiff agreed that Confirmation needed to be celebrated when a

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child reached the age of reason. In 1910, Pope (St.) Pius X, who had been concerned that every child should have the grace needed to ensure a deep spiritual life and to be part of the mission to share Christ with others, lowered the age of First Communion to seven. The assumption was that Confirmation would remain as his predecessor had taught, but it had the effect of moving Confirmation to later years. Confirmations throughout the century were variously celebrated from third grade to high school, with no “rhyme or reason.”

In 1963, Pope John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council which resulted in the constitution on the sacred liturgy *Sancrosanctam Concilium*. It called for the Rite of Confirmation to be restored to the ancient practice. Pope Paul VI reiterated that in writing: “The faithful are born anew by Baptism, strengthened by the sacrament of Confirmation, and finally are sustained by the food of eternal life in the Eucharist. By means of

these sacraments of Christian initiation, they thus receive in increasing measure the treasures of divine life and advance towards the perfection of charity.” The “original order” has been expressly noted in the 1983 Code of Canon Law, the 1988 Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, and the 1992 Catechism of the Catholic Church. Pope Benedict gave special emphasis to this proper order in his encyclical on the Eucharist: “It must never be forgotten that our reception of Baptism and Confirmation is ordered to the Eucharist. The Holy Eucharist, then, brings Christian initiation to completion and represents the center and goal of all sacramental life.”

At a time, when the bishops of the United States are most concerned about recovering the sense of Jesus’ Eucharistic Presence, Pope Benedict’s words gives good reason to restoring the order of the sacraments of initiation in our parish.

MASS INTENTIONS

Mon, May 30

8:30 +In remembrance of those who served our nation

Tues, May 31: *The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary*

8:30 +Siner family by Linda Siner

Wed, June 1: *St. Justin*

8:30 +Mamawal family by Linda Siner

Thurs, June 2: *Sts. Marcellinus and Peter*

8:30 +Ian Sousa by family

Fri, June 3: *St. Charles Lwanga and Companions*

8:30 +Edita Mamawal by Linda Siner

Sat, June 4

8:30 +Siner family by Linda Siner

4:30 +Fred Ferraiuolo by Deacon Tony and Shirley Ferraiuolo

Sun, June 5: *Pentecost Sunday*

8:00 +Al and Rita Schildwachter by family friends

10:00 +William and Natalie Yachymiak by Ross family

12:00 Pro Populo (for the people of the parish)

The Sunday Mass at noon will ALWAYS be offered only for the People of the Parish. The offering for an unannounced Mass is \$10; for an announced Mass—\$15.

READINGS FOR THE SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Reading I – Acts 7:55-60

St. Stephen is our Church’s true protomartyr. Elements of his story as presented parallel that of Jesus, including his stoning death “outside the city” and his plea to God “not to hold this sin against them.” Interesting that the future St. Paul was a witness to it.

Reading II – Revelation 22:12-14, 16-17, 20

The oracle here identifies Jesus as God, the Alpha and Omega, who will be “coming soon” to offer life-giving water to the thirsty.

The Gospel – John 17:20-26

Jesus’ powerful prayer declares the unity of Himself with the Father and with the disciples there with Him. Jesus will continue to be in the world praying for them and supporting their mission to make Him known.



Scan the QR code to visit the **Worship Aid** page for the readings, antiphons, and music for the Sunday Mass.

The Sunday 10 am **Mass is livestreamed** on YouTube. Connect through the link on the parish website, stmariannecope.com.