

RESTORING THE ORDER OF THE SACRAMENTS

**HISTORICAL OVERVIEW
TODAY'S NEEDS**

**St. Marianne Cope Parish
May 2022**

WHAT DOES RESTORED ORDER MEAN?

Restored order refers to celebrating the sacraments of initiation in the order of the early Church:

Baptism

Confirmation

Eucharist

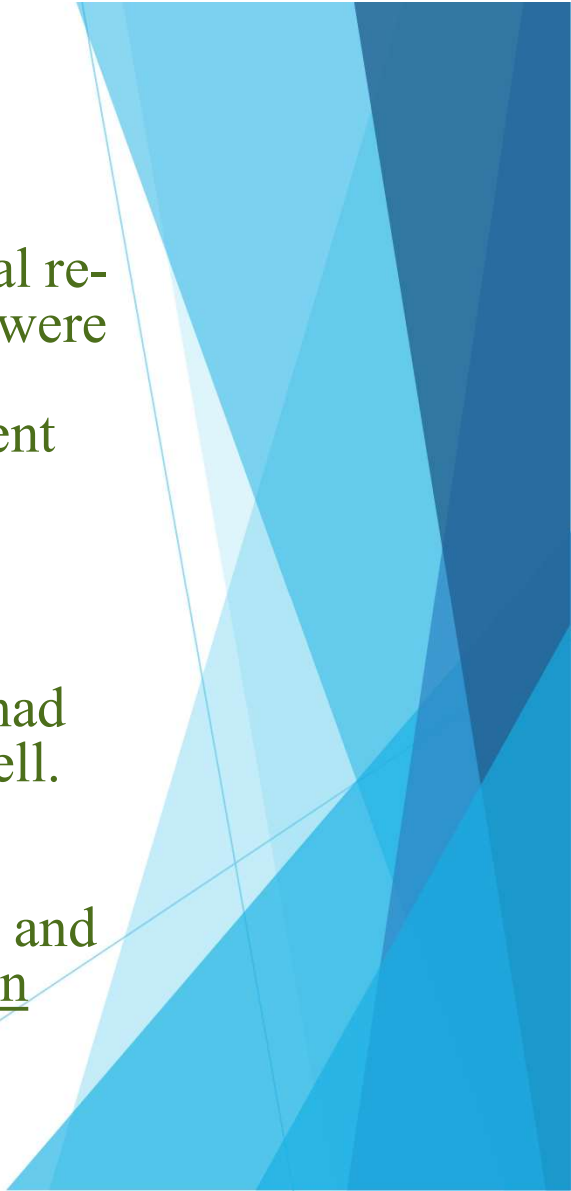
A little closer look at Church history and the Sacraments of Initiation....

- ▶ The roots of the initiation Sacraments are contained in the New Testament, and there are many passages throughout Scripture that are referenced as sources for the Sacraments, including the Book of Acts when Peter describes repentance and being baptized in the name of Jesus.
- ▶ In the very early years of the Church, Jesus' followers came to understand that Baptism, a post-baptismal Anointing and Laying-on of Hands, followed by the Eucharist, was what Christ expected for his followers to become adopted children of God and full members of the Church.
- ▶ As early as 150 A.D. writings from great Church teachers such as Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and Hippolytus outline an ancient format for this process of Christian Initiation that would happen once a year at the Easter Vigil. While Baptism and Eucharist would be given by the priest, the post-baptismal anointing and "laying on of hands" (Confirmation) in our Roman Church was *reserved for the bishop*.

- ▶ The reign of Constantine in the 4th century ended the extensive persecution of Christians and sparked a widespread growth in Christianity.
- ▶ With larger populations from greater geographical areas seeking to join the Church, it became impractical for everyone to be initiated at one Easter Vigil celebration at the bishop's church.
- ▶ The problem was addressed in the Roman Church by allowing priests to baptize people *of all ages* in the outlying areas, with the understanding that those baptized in the those areas would then seek out the post-baptismal laying-on of hands and anointing of the bishop as soon as possible.
- ▶ This very practical solution to the growth in Christianity in the Roman Church is how the post-baptismal laying on of hands and anointing of Confirmation became separated from the unified initiation rite of Baptism-Confirmation-Eucharist.
- ▶ By the Middle Ages, children no longer received Communion at Baptism, but parents were obligated to have their baby receive Confirmation as soon as they could get the child to the Bishop.

- ▶ Confirmation continued to be viewed as the completion of Baptism, and Confirmation was considered to be an important spiritual preparation for a young person to receive Jesus in the Sacrament of Eucharist.
- ▶ Over time, with the growth in the number of Catholics and the increased amount of time between Baptism and the availability of a Bishop, children were older when they received Confirmation.
- ▶ Teachings from the Popes and early Canon Law was clear that (a) Confirmation completed Baptism, (b) Confirmation should be celebrated at or close to the “age of reason”, and (c) Confirmation prepared a child to receive the Eucharist.
- ▶ In the late 1800’s Pope Leo XIII wrote a letter to the bishops explaining that young children needed the strength of confirmation to better prepare them to receive the Eucharist and be more receptive to the teachings of the Church.

- ▶ By the early 1900s, it was the norm for children in the United States to be baptized as infants, to receive Confirmation after they finished elementary school, and then to receive their first Communion sometime after receiving Confirmation.
- ▶ And then in 1910, Pope Pius X sought to respond to a heresy called Jansenism that taught that Eucharist was a reward for good behavior rather than a Sacramental gift of grace.
- ▶ Concerned that some dioceses were requiring children to be much older before they could receive the Eucharist, Pope Pius X wrote in a document entitled *Quam singulari*, that the age for first Communion for all children baptized as infants would be lowered to seven.
- ▶ Because his focus was on Communion, Pope Pius X's letter never mentioned the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- ▶ At the time of his letter, most children in the United States received Confirmation and Eucharist when their primary education concluded, which was around the age of twelve.
- ▶ In the document, Pius X lowered the age for Eucharist to seven, but since no mention was made of Confirmation in Pius X's papal letter, the age for Confirmation in the United States remained at around twelve.

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- ▶ Meanwhile, *Protestant* influences helped to re-shape the way Confirmation was being *perceived* by Catholics.
 - ▶ The *Episcopal* Church's "confirmation" was a non-sacramental re-affirmation of one's baptism. Young adolescents were told they were "choosing" their faith and reaffirming their Baptism through Confirmation. Confirmation was explained as being a commitment rite and their rite of passage. This is not based on the Catholic theology of Confirmation.
 - ▶ The non-sacramental *Lutheran* confirmation was *earned* by a young person by completing his/her formal faith formation and had an influence on what was being taught in Catholic parishes as well.
 - ▶ Young Catholics were told that rigorous preparation for Confirmation would mark their ***graduation*** from faith formation and would usher them into Catholic adulthood. Again, this was not in accordance with Catholic history or teaching on Confirmation.

Common Concerns about Restoring the Proper Order of the Sacraments

My child is too young to understand what is going on –

- ▶ Our legal system, and the science of psychology, deem a child of 7 or 8 to be able to understand right from wrong and to have basic understandings about life. The Catholic church believes that a child of this age can have a basic understanding of the Initiation Sacraments. Children at this “age of reason” will certainly not have an adult understanding of the Initiation Sacraments, but neither will a 13 or 14 year old. An 8 year-old’s understanding will differ from a 28 year-old, 38 year-old, etc. . . Years of experience and ***further faith formation*** will enhance and develop the 7 or 8 year-old’s faith understanding and maturity as we can see from our own experiences.

Isn't Confirmation a sacrament of maturity that should come after First Communion as a child grows older?

Confirmation is actually the COMPLETION of Baptism (by the full Gift of the Holy Spirit) and requires nothing more than the same age appropriate maturity to receive the Eucharist. As with the Eucharist, children should be able to receive to strength of both these sacraments at the age of reason.

Canon Law sets any time after age 7 for Confirmation. It is important to keep in mind: Sacraments are a BEGINNING for when a child matures in faith and grows in an understanding of the sacraments. It is the beginning of a lifetime of being nourished at the table of the Lord.

Does Faith Formation end after Confirmation and Holy Eucharist?

NO! Remember, receiving these sacraments is
FULL INITIATION into the Catholic Church!
It is **NOT** graduation!!

*Family Formation will continue to be for grades 1-6.

*Family Ministry programs will be used in grades 7-12 providing ways for children to see the relevance of their faith in their lives, including service opportunities to understand Christ's teaching, *"Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."* (Mt. 25-40)

*Faith is simply something we do as parents to support our children to become saints one day, not a "requirement" to receive a sacrament!

*Parents remain connected with their children's faith life while the children have the opportunity to grow in their faith through developing a deeper relationship with God through prayer, knowledge and service!

How does this “look” for us?

(*child’s grade level in 22-23/**grade level for Confirmation)

- ▶ *Grades 7 and 8; Confirmed in Fall of 2023 (Chosen/Decision Point) **8-9
- ▶ *Grades 4, 5 and 6 in year 22-23; Confirmed in Spring of 2024: (FF + Confirmation prep.) **5-6-7
- ▶ *Grades 2 and 3 in year 22-23; Confirmed in Fall of 2024: (FF + Confirmation Prep) **3-4
- ▶ *Grade 1 in year 22-23; Spring of 2024 is Reconciliation; Confirmed and First Communion in Spring of 2025 (FF + Confirmation Prep) **3 (now in “Restored Order”)

Older students or children who enter after first grade will have a two/three year process of preparation with first year including Reconciliation and second year Confirmation/Communion. (**Only students/families presently or new in the program are eligible. No transfers from other parishes may enter unless they have moved into the parish.*)

GRADE LEVEL 2022-2023

(Communions continue in 2nd grade this year)

CONFIRMATION YEAR

Grades 7 and 8

FALL 2023

Grades 2 and 3

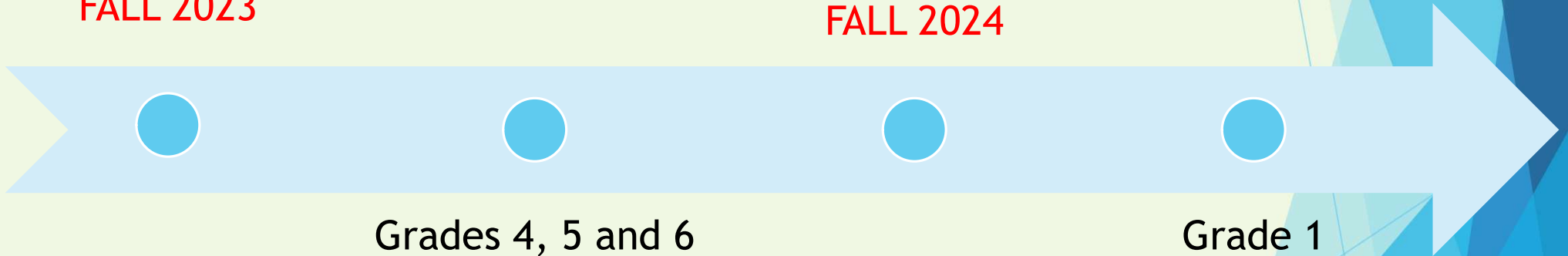
FALL 2024

Grades 4, 5 and 6

SPRING 2024

Grade 1

SPRING 2025



YEAR 2022-2023

YEAR OF CONFIRMATION

GRADE 8	FALL 2023
GRADE 7	FALL 2023
GRADE 6	SPRING 2024
GRADE 5	SPRING 2024
GRADE 4	SPRING 2024
GRADE 3	FALL 2024
GRADE 2	FALL 2024
GRADE 1	SPRING 2025

How it looks once the "Order is Restored"

- ▶ Ongoing monthly Family Formation classes for grades 1-5 (optional PreK/K; required in first, second and third)
- ▶ Workshops will be held in the Fall for Reconciliation for the sacrament in the spring of 2nd grade (or for any "catch up student")
- ▶ Sacrament of Reconciliation will be held in Lent/Easter season in 2nd grade
- ▶ Two workshops will be held in Fall for Confirmation and Eucharist celebration in Spring of 3rd grade (or for any "catch up student")
- ▶ Confirmation and Eucharist celebration will be anytime after Easter of 3rd grade (or for any "catch up student")
- ▶ Mass attendance and commitment to the program and sacramental preparation will be expected

Why is this so important now?

- ▶ *spiritual needs in society today are greater than ever (*The researchers, Smith and Denton, discovered that the majority of American teens, regardless of their faith, believe in what they termed Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. This means that they believe God exists, that He created the world and watches over it but rarely intervenes; that God wants people to be good, nice and fair; that the main goal of life is to be happy and feel good about oneself; and that good people go to heaven.*)
- ▶ *parents have a better chance to prepare their children for the sacraments when they are naturally more receptive to learning about them and the graces they are given (note the openness and enthusiasm for receiving the Eucharist at that younger age!)

- ▶ *look at lifelong and continuing formation as a deepening of the faith and their relationship with Christ from the graces received in the sacraments – not as a requirement to “earn” another sacrament
- ▶ *CCC tells us that the *Eucharist* completes sacraments of initiation
- ▶ *spend time from middle and high school in more active reasons for practicing their faith rather than aiming towards the “certificate” indicating “completion” instead of the understanding that they are “**continuing**” a lifelong faith journey
- ▶ *adolescence is a difficult time when children would benefit from having extra graces and the gifts of the Holy Spirit at an earlier age

- ▶ *making a “mature” decision at that age can actually be more difficult as a teen because of so much confusion and turbulence they face with daily life challenges
- ▶ *adolescence is a difficult time when children would benefit from having extra graces and the gifts of the Holy Spirit at an earlier age
- ▶ *delaying the sacrament of Confirmation delays the effectiveness that the sacrament provides
- ▶ *average age of falling away Catholics is 13
- ▶ *nearly 80% of fallen away Catholics were never confirmed

- ▶ *nearly 80% of confirmed teens fall away within 10 years
- ▶ *RCIA process that includes children says that all three sacraments of initiation should be received together
- ▶ *Confirmation is not a sacrament of “my choosing God” but God **choosing me** at my Baptism
- ▶ *Confirmation should not be viewed as a reward because of work completed
- ▶ *Eucharist (not Confirmation) is the summit of initiation

Act of Consecration to the Holy Spirit

Blessed Holy Spirit, Divine Spirit of light and love, I consecrate to You my understanding, heart, and will, my whole being for time and for eternity.

May my understanding always adhere to Your heavenly inspirations, and to the teaching of the Catholic Church of which You are the unquestionable guide.

May my heart be ever filled with love of God and for my neighbor.

May my will be ever conformed to Your divine will.

Also may my whole life be a faithful example of the life and virtues of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father and You be honor and glory forever. **Amen.**

