



***Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon***  
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July 8, 2020

**Age of the Sacrament of Confirmation**

**Dear Clergy, Religious, & Lay Faithful of the Diocese of Saskatoon:**

Over the last year I carried out an extensive consultation regarding the age of Confirmation in our diocese. This was in large part due to many clergy and laity – especially parents – approaching me about concerns regarding the current age of Confirmation, and the ability of young children at the age of seven to fully comprehend and appreciate all of the catechetical formation in preparation for this and two other Sacraments: Holy Communion and Reconciliation.

I tasked the Sacraments Committee to assist me with a consultation to the Deaneries of our diocese, and to review their feedback. Deans of each of the six deaneries were requested to carry out a consultation with pastors that featured the feedback from lay parishioners, especially parents and catechists.

The results featured the following points:

- Preparation for three sacraments in one year was overwhelming for children, parents and catechists;
- Delaying confirmation provides a greater opportunity for further family catechesis between sacraments;
- Preparing for confirmation alone at a later age presents a better opportunity for service projects and retreats;
- More emphasis should be placed on forming disciples and intentional accompaniment of families.

Consultation also included discussion with the religious education coordinator of the Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools. The religious education program references the Sacraments throughout the different grade levels and in age-appropriate ways. There is reference to the Sacrament of Confirmation at several stages of the religious formation in Catholic schools. Thus, changing the age of Confirmation would not affect their religious curriculum.

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the Sacrament of Confirmation enriches those who are baptized "...with a special strength of the Holy Spirit." The sacraments are occasions of the reception of God's gift of grace, which actually brings about ongoing conversion of life and heart in us. The hope is that the decision to change the confirmation age will encourage more young people to receive the sacrament at a time in their ongoing faith formation to better strengthen them spiritually and enrich the entire Body of Christ.

In the first centuries of the Church, the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation were celebrated along with the first reception of the Eucharist in one continuous rite, much as is done in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults today. Beginning around the 5th-6th century, as conferral of the Sacrament of Confirmation was reserved primarily to the bishop, a separation in time between the celebration of Baptism and Confirmation became the norm.

This has been the case in the Latin Rite Catholic Church since then, with various adjustments for the age of candidates for Confirmation throughout the centuries. The practice in the Diocese of Saskatoon was changed in 2006 from the age of 11 (Grade 6) being the norm, to the age of 7 (Grade 2).

***As a result of the latest consultation and given the findings and recommendations of the Sacraments Committee, I am taking the decision to establish Grade six (age 11) as the normative year for the Sacrament of Confirmation, beginning in 2021.*** I have also instructed the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis to outline for parishes appropriate Confirmation preparation programs beginning this Fall, and to outline instructional events to assist parishes throughout our diocese plan for this shift.

Because of the circumstances of the Covid 19 pandemic, some of our parishes may still be dealing with younger candidates who were prepared to celebrate their Confirmation this past Spring. *If there are any outstanding confirmations that were delayed this past spring-summer 2020, I would be pleased to receive a request from any pastor to celebrate those Confirmations in 2021.* Otherwise, I direct our parishes to plan for future preparation and formation programs for Confirmation at Grade 6.

I hope that this shift will not only present new and ongoing opportunities for effective faith-formation of youth and their families in preparing for all of the Sacraments but may also be the opportunity to foster new initiatives and creativity regarding ongoing faith-formation and youth activities for the young people and their families of the parishes of our diocese.

I take this opportunity to commit myself with all of you to holding our youth and our families in prayer, and to personally supporting new and creative ways to assist

parents and families in the ongoing faith formation of our young people. I also wish to recognize the many catechists of our parishes who have faithfully carried out and supported our families and parishes in preparing young people for the Sacraments of Holy Communion, Reconciliation, and Confirmation. On behalf of the diocese I thank you very much for your hard work and dedication. May this announced new approach be an occasion for renewal of your work, and perhaps also the expansion of support and efforts as we all seek to bring to bear the resources and efforts to the faith formation of our youth and their families.

Sincerely, in Christ

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Mark A. Hagemoen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

✠ Most Reverend Mark A. Hagemoen