



Catholic Diocese of Columbus

June 2025

Office of the Bishop
614 • 224 • 2251

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The joy and wonder of the Solemnity of Pentecost provided us with an opportunity to pause and reflect on the gifts of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives. We read in Acts of the Apostles how the Apostles, led by the first Vicar of Christ, St. Peter, proclaimed the message of Jesus Christ and ensured Jesus' message of salvation would be taught and delivered to all the masses.

Recognizing the importance of catechetical formation for the Catholic faithful, particularly our children and their families, it became apparent to me that the formation of families was one of the most important pastoral issues to address in the Diocese of Columbus. My discernment led me to ask the following question over two years ago: How would the formation of the family, especially children, be affected by lowering the age of reception of the sacrament of Confirmation? A primary reason for my inquiry was the urgency to address the catechetical needs of our children at an earlier age, as the phenomenon of a child choosing to leave the Catholic faith altogether had become more commonplace at a younger age.

As a result, I commissioned a Diocesan Committee to address the possibility of lowering the age of Confirmation in the Diocese of Columbus. This committee consisted of the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis, the Office of Divine Worship, the Office of Catholic Schools, and several Priests of the Diocese of Columbus who were either members of the Presbyteral Council or Deans. The Office of Evangelization was tasked with leading and moderating the committee's work to develop a working document that would provide further data to determine the viability of lowering the age of Confirmation and its effects throughout the Diocese of Columbus.

After a year of monthly consultations and deliberations, the committee presented the results of their discussion to me, unanimously affirming the proposal to lower the age of Confirmation to age nine/ten, fourth grade. Upon reception of these results, the Presbyteral Council and Deans met to discuss these findings and offer their input into the initial conclusion from the Confirmation Committee. The Presbyteral Council and Deans agreed that further dialogue was necessary, and thus a focus group that consisted of both parish and school personnel from across the Diocese was brought together to discuss the lowering of the age of Confirmation. The result of that focus group expressed an overwhelming support for lowering the age of Confirmation. A primary reason for their support of this proposal was the unanimous concern of families not raising their children in the Catholic faith, and the need to resuscitate the Catholic identity of our children through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Carefully discerning the concise and intensive study of the various committees and councils mentioned, I have decided to lower the age of Confirmation to the age of about nine to ten years old in the Diocese of Columbus. Some, upon reading my decision, may be wondering why, if the age of Confirmation is being lowered to age nine, we do not simply transition to a process of *Restored Order of the Sacraments of Initiation* where, after baptism, the child receives the sacrament of Confirmation before the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist at the age of reason? It became apparent to all involved that the idea of initiating a *Restored Order* process for the Diocese of Columbus would prove to be a catechetical and logistical challenge that the Diocese of Columbus could not in good conscience adequately prepare for at this time. However, the proposal to transition the Diocese of Columbus to a *Restored Order* sacramental process will be a continual topic of discussion and discernment over the next several years.

The lowering of the age of Confirmation is a change from the current Diocesan policy. It will require several phases of pastoral, liturgical, and catechetical transition and formation of families, their children, and all parish and school personnel involved with this process. It is imperative now more than ever to address the necessity to form our families in the Catholic faith and reconcile their faith with Jesus Christ and His Church. Children need to be exposed to the awe and wonder of God at a much earlier age and recognize their inherent value and worth as a child of God created in His image and likeness.

The Church does not advocate or teach that once a child receives the sacrament of Confirmation, he has graduated from the Catholic Church and is no longer required to practice the Catholic faith. Also, the administration of the sacrament is not based on human maturity but on the internal conversion of the child who willingly desires to have an active sacramental relationship with Jesus Christ. The sacrament of Confirmation is part of a lifelong process of faith formation where the person is further initiated into the mysteries of Jesus Christ through active participation in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and reception of His true presence in the Holy Eucharist. With the spiritual trajectory of many families and their children trending toward a disaffiliation from the Church, the emphasis on family faith formation as a lifelong process is vital toward safeguarding the Catholic identity of our children.

All of us have a responsibility to proclaim the salvific message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and provide a visible and loving path toward Christ for every soul we encounter. Strengthened by the Holy Spirit through the Sacrament of Confirmation, these young disciples in Christ will be better equipped to tackle the indifference and confusion they will face in a world that, at times, denies the existence or belief in God. Hence, we as a Diocesan community are called to strengthen our efforts in the formation of the family and parish youth ministry opportunities to provide a continual mystagogical presence in the lives of the young, long after they have received the Holy Spirit in Confirmation.

The new Confirmation process will be implemented over the next four years, beginning in the fall of 2025 with initial training and formation and reception of the sacrament of Confirmation in the Spring of 2026 for Deanery Six, the Central Deanery. From the fall of 2025 to the Spring of 2029, a coordination of Deaneries will be determined with the assistance of the Dean of each Deanery for the reception of the sacrament of Confirmation. The Office of Evangelization and Catechesis, in partnership with the Office of Catholic Schools and the Office of Divine Worship, will provide monthly training and formation of all respective parish catechetical staff, religious educators, and Catholic School educators over the next four years.

In the next several months, expect multiple Diocesan communications on the new policy from the Office of Communications via the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis, the Office of Catholic Schools, and the Office of Divine Worship.

I would like to personally thank you for your generous patience and understanding, as together we prepare to embark on reclaiming our identity and relationship with Jesus Christ. As we transition to this new era of our faith, thank you for all your evangelization and catechetical efforts in catechizing our families and young people. Let us call upon the Holy Spirit to guide us on this journey of faith in Jesus Christ.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend Earl K. Fernandes
Bishop of Columbus