



DIOCESE OF LAFAYETTE

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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

February 28, 2023

DECREE

Dear Monsignor/Father,

For some time, I have been discerning in prayer and through my observations, a desire to assure that as many of the faithful as possible receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. The current practice in the Diocese of Lafayette is for Confirmation to be administered in the eleventh (11th) grade. In my judgement, I believe that more of the faithful will avail themselves of the sacrament if it is offered at an earlier age. Canon Law and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* emphasize that Confirmation completes the effects of Baptism and is an essential rite of the Sacraments of Initiation. The Sacrament is too often misunderstood as simply an incentive for remaining in religion classes through high school while the effects and benefits of the Sacrament are less emphasized. Confirmation,

- roots us more deeply in the divine filiation which makes us cry, “Abba! Father!”;
- unites us more firmly to Christ;
- increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us;
- renders our bond with the Church more perfect;
- nourishes the possible seed of a vocation to the priesthood of religious life;
- gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly, and never be ashamed of the Cross (CCC no. 1303).

In the Latin Church, Confirmation has usually been administered from the age of discretion to sixteen (16) years of age. In danger of death, Confirmation should be administered even if one has not reached the age of reason (CCC no. 1307). The *Catechism* reminds us that we should not confuse adult faith with the adult age of natural growth. According to Saint Thomas Aquinas, “Many children through the strength of the Holy Spirit they have received, have bravely fought for Christ even to the shedding of their blood” (STh III, 72, 8 *ad* 2).

All and only the baptized who are not yet confirmed can receive Confirmation. A child with the use of reason who is prepared for and wishes to receive Confirmation **has a right to it**. To receive Confirmation, one must be suitably instructed, properly disposed, and able to renew one’s baptismal promises. Special needs children who lack the use of reason should be confirmed at the age that other children are confirmed. The use of reason is not a requirement for Confirmation.

Preparation should include prayer to make one docile to the work of the Holy Spirit (e.g. a retreat), receiving the Sacrament of Penance, and choosing a sponsor qualified by Church law to lead the confirmed in supporting their spiritual lives.

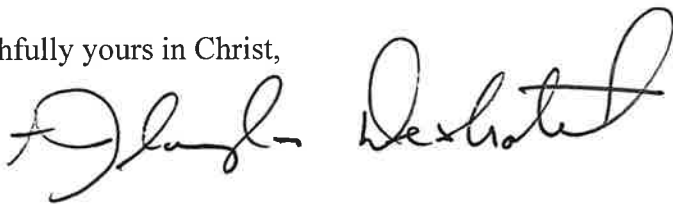
Two national studies produced by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), have found that young Catholics are abandoning their faith around the age of ten (10), and certainly by seventeen (17). Simply put, our younger Catholics need the strengthening graces and gifts of the Sacrament of Confirmation at an earlier age during this time of increasing secularism.

For these reasons and after consultation with Pastors and the Presbyteral Council, I decree that all parishes in the Diocese of Lafayette begin transitioning to the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation in the eighth (8th) grade. The logistics of accomplishing this will depend on the size of the congregations you serve.

There can be several scenarios, at the pastor's discretion: *first year*—tenth (10th) and eleventh (11th) grade; *then*—ninth (9th) and tenth (10th) grade; *then*—eighth (8th) and ninth (9th) grade; and *finally*—eighth (8th) grade. You may contact the Office of Catechetics and Chad Judice for suggestions regarding the transition.

With gratitude for your pastoral ministry and wishing you many blessings, I am,

Faithfully yours in Christ,



Most Reverend J. Douglas Deshotel, D.D.
Bishop of Lafayette

JDD:lrl



Mrs. Maureen K. Fontenot, PHR SHRM-CP
Chancellor

