



October 28, 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

For several years, a number of our priests and laity have requested reconsideration of the age of Confirmation in the Archdiocese of Seattle. Among the reasons that motivated this request were the desire that our youth receive the gift of the Holy Spirit as they transitioned through adolescence into adulthood, the opportunity for recipients to exercise the graces of Confirmation through meaningful Christian ministry during their high school years, and to ensure an increase in confirmed Catholics. From a pastoral perspective, there was also the need to correct the erroneous perception that Confirmation is tantamount to graduation and the concept that Confirmation was a personal choice of the candidate, rather than the freely given gift of the Holy Spirit who desires all the Baptized to share actively in the Paschal Mystery as authentic witnesses of Jesus in the world.

After much prayer, I have decided in consultation with the Presbyteral Council that the normal age of Confirmation in the Archdiocese of Seattle will now be changed from eleventh grade or sixteen years old to *seventh grade or the equivalent age*.

In order to help our parishes with this transition process, the Seattle Archdiocese Confirmation Policies have been revised. The principle changes described in the policies are:

1. The new normal age of Confirmation as *seventh grade or the equivalent age*, which allows any seventh grader, regardless of age, to present himself or herself for Confirmation.
2. Clarification regarding the role of Catholic Schools in sacramental catechetical preparation that encourages collaboration between the parish and school community.
3. The stages (and ages) of Remote and Proximate Sacramental Preparation for Confirmation
4. The basic content that must be covered during Immediate Sacramental Preparation for Confirmation
5. The role and commitments of the family and parish community to the Confirmation candidates.

Many of our pastors and parish staff have voiced concerns about the lack of uniformity between one parish and another regarding sacramental preparation. The reality of our great Archdiocese is that it encompasses great diversity; this diversity both enriches it and also presents very particular challenges depending on the geographical location, resources and personnel available in each parish. For these reasons, our revised policies provide the essentials that all parishes should implement. At the same time, the policies provide sufficient flexibility so that each pastor and his staff or volunteers are able to meet the needs of their community with the best pastoral care.

During the next year, the Archdiocese will continue to collect feedback from our parishes as they implement the new policies and it will consider and make modifications as needed.

I am grateful to our pastors, parish staff and volunteer Confirmation coordinators who shared their time, feedback and initiative during the consultation and planning process. I am grateful to all of you for your faith, patience and willingness to embrace this endeavor despite any natural concerns. I pray that God continues to bless your ministries and mission so that all our young people may receive his grace.

In the heart of Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul D. Etienne". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Paul" being the most prominent.

Most Reverend Paul D. Etienne, DD, STL  
Archbishop of Seattle

Encl.

Revised Confirmation Policies

Substantive Changes in Confirmation Policies