



Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Changes to the Age of Confirmation

Why is the Confirmation age being changed?

For some time, clergy and parish catechetical leaders have expressed a desire to lower the age of Confirmation. The two collective reasons as articulated by Bishop Duca are:

1. A strong desire to offer the graces of the sacrament to young people earlier and in closer proximity to their baptism.
2. To prepare young people and their families at a less busy time of their lives. As our youth enter adolescence, their schedules, involvements, commitments and pastoral needs increase in degree and complexity. Inviting young people to receive those strengthening graces at an earlier time will help fortify them as they encounter the trials and challenges of young adulthood.

Why has 7th grade (approximately 12 years old) been selected as the preferred age at which to confer the sacrament?

Middle school is a time when young people are starting to come of age and grow in personal and spiritual maturity. When prepared in developmentally appropriate ways, middle schoolers can comprehend the more abstract theological components of the sacrament in a way that younger students may not. These young men and women can also benefit from opportunities to encounter Christ more fully through the preparation and reception for the sacrament. A preparation process that provides an encounter with the Holy Spirit through retreats, service projects, prayer experiences, and community involvement can help galvanize a young person's faith and properly dispose them to receive the graces of the Sacrament. It avoids the "graduation mentality," and it engages students before they encounter the challenges of high school.

When will the age change be implemented?

The current 2024/2025 Confirmation cycle will not have any changes. The preparation and celebration of Confirmation will continue to take place as already planned in according to current practices (11th grade).

The transition plan will vary according to the size of the parish. Pastors and their catechetical team will be presented with various models to discern which best meets the needs of parishioners.

My parish is HUGE! How can we expect to confirm all our high schoolers or all our middle schoolers?

The transition plan recognizes that for some parishes, the prospect of confirming all high schoolers or middle schoolers in one year is impractical and overwhelming. There may be some larger parishes who need a longer timeline to implement this change. For this reason, various models will be provided. One on one consultation will also be available to pastors and catechetical leaders that will be provided by the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis.

My parish is quite small. Would it be ok if we just went ahead and confirmed all our 7-11 graders this year?

Due to the wide range of developmental abilities and maturity levels, it is not advisable to prepare such a wide range of young people in the same program. It is advised, though, that, if possible, parishes first confirm all high schoolers first and then, thereafter, all middle schoolers in the next cycle.

What role will my Catholic School have in preparing young people for the sacrament?

The role of the parish and the wider community is essential to the preparation process. Young people need to be formed within and supported by the primary sacramental community of which they are a part – their parish community.

Does this change effect OCIA (Roman Catholic Initiation for Children)?

No. Children over the age of 7 who have not been baptized and express a desire to enter the Catholic Church will be prepared in the OCIA process and will receive the sacraments according to the Catechumenate model as is currently the practice of the Church.

It is often the case that youth and families simply stop coming to church after they “graduate” from Confirmation. Sometimes, Confirmation is the only thing keeping them in the church through high school. Won’t lowering the age simply de-incentivize them to continue coming to church which will result in children leaving the Church earlier?

Often, we run the risk of using Confirmation as a “sacramental incentive” to keep youth and families involved through high school. In some parishes, the only thing

offered to adolescents is Confirmation preparation. Many programs employ a school-based model for sacramental preparation which includes mandatory classes, and a checklist of requirements young people must complete in order to “earn” the sacrament much in the same way they “earn” graduation in school.

When the Sacrament of Confirmation is approached in these ways and not properly integrated into a long-term, comprehensive faith formation strategy aimed at equipping parents and facilitating discipleship, the result is often a “graduation” from parish life. That is why we cannot simply change the age and expect better results.

How does the diocese plan to support parishes as they transition to the lower age?

The Secretariat of Evangelization and the SENT Core Team is available for questions and consultation. Beginning in early 2025, the Diocese of Baton Rouge will be offering effective models for Confirmation preparation, best practices, and resources to walk through new policy changes, discuss effective practices, share new resources, and accompany confirmation coordinators and parishes through this transition and process.

In addition, the diocese will be working with parishes to help them develop a comprehensive strategy to engage young people and their parents before, during, and beyond Confirmation.

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