

Restored Order - a letter to parents and parishioners

What does it mean for our Bartlesville Catholic Community

Are you confused by all the talk of the “restored order”? Are you unfamiliar with terms such as “sacraments of initiation” and “age of reason”?

Don't worry; it's all quite understandable once you know the basics.

Essentially, the restoration of the order means two things: 1. Confirmation will be received before the reception of first Eucharist; 2. Both sacraments will be received in third grade at the same Mass.

Keep reading for more information on the restored order, including the basics of what a sacrament is and how this initiative could spark a new outpouring of faith in our young people.

First, what is a sacrament?

Most Catholics know the names of the sacraments, but they might not know the definition of a sacrament. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) defines sacraments as “efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us” (1131).

What are the sacraments of initiation?

There are seven sacraments in the Church: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders and Matrimony. The Church refers to Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist as “Sacraments of Initiation,” as they “lay the foundations of every Christian life” (CCC, 1212).

OK, so what do you mean by “restored order”?

The “restored order” refers to celebrating the sacraments of initiation in the order in which God designed them to be given: baptism, confirmation, first Eucharist. It also restores the practice of administering the sacraments of confirmation and first Eucharist when they reach the age of reason.

Practically speaking, how will this look for my children?

Your children will prepare for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and begin going to Confession in second grade. The following year, they will prepare for Confirmation and first Eucharist, and receive both sacraments at the same Mass in third grade.

When did this order get disrupted?

It happened in 1910, when Pope St. Pius X lowered the age of first Communion to the age of reason (around 7 years old). When he did so, he did not address the age of Confirmation, thus leaving us with our current practice of delayed Confirmation.

Why is the Diocese of Tulsa doing this now?

The Diocese of Tulsa is restoring Confirmation to its original place because children need more grace at an earlier age to become saints in our increasingly secular world. The diocese is not doing this on its own, but is responding to calls made in the documents of Vatican II, Pope Benedict XVI's document *Sacramentum Caritatis*, and the personal encouragement Benedict XVI gave to Archbishop Samuel Aquila in 2012.

Won't the confirmed kids just drop out of religious education earlier?

They might. It depends on their parents, *who are the primary teachers of the faith for their children*. Parents and siblings have the first responsibility of being an example of Jesus Christ to each other and living the Gospel each day. Children will stay in religious education if they see their parents striving to grow in holiness through family prayer, Scripture reading, Sunday Mass, regular confession, and living a life of charity. It is the parent's responsibility to see that their children grow in the faith. Our parishes are there to assist in this process. We should all be life-long learners when it comes to our faith.

How can children make an adult commitment to the Church at such a young age?

Contrary to a widespread misperception, confirmation is not the sacrament of adult commitment to the faith. It is a cause of spiritual maturity, not recognition of physical maturity. As the Catechism says, "Although confirmation is sometimes called the 'sacrament of Christian maturity,' we must not confuse adult faith with the adult age of natural growth, nor forget that the baptismal grace is a grace of free, unmerited election and does not need 'ratification' to become effective." Confirmation assists those who receive it in growing in Christian maturity.

When will the transition happen in our Bartlesville Catholic Community/ what will it look like for you?

It is expected that parishes in the Diocese of Tulsa will begin implementation of the restored order anytime over the next 5 year period, fall of 2024 and be fully complete by the spring of 2029. The decision has been made in our Bartlesville parishes of St. John and St. James to begin the process this year, 2024-2025. Grades 3rd through high school who have already received Sacraments of Reconciliation and Communion will be prepared and receive Confirmation in Spring 2025. We will have a transition year for our incoming second graders for Reconciliation and First Communion. This year those second graders who have started last year in first grade preparing for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Communion will still receive those this year, Spring 2025. Then Confirmation will follow in their 3rd year 2025-2026.

2024-2025

2ND graders will receive Reconciliation and Communion

3rd grade through High School will receive Confirmation (and Rec and Communion if needed)

2025-2026

2nd graders will receive Reconciliation

3rd graders will receive Confirmation (have received First Communion previous year)

2026 and beyond

2nd Graders will receive Reconciliation

3rd graders will receive Confirmation and First Communion

What does this mean for the rest of us?

First, it will underscore the fact that the Holy Eucharist, not Confirmation, is the culmination of Christian initiation. It will also help to remind the faithful that the six other sacraments are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it.

Also, this is an opportunity to rediscover the meaning and purpose of our own initiation into Christ's body. Our hope is that change will prompt the faithful to encounter the origin, depth, and meaning of all the sacraments, helping them grow in their relationship with Our Lord. We should all be life-long learners when it comes to our faith.

Pastoral letter

Bishop Konderla's pastoral letter guides the faithful through the change in the order of the sacraments of initiation for youth in the Church. An online version of the letter is available on the St. John and St. James church website under the religious education tab.

Year of Changes

Please understand that this year will be a year full of changes and blessings. We ask that you be patient and pray for the volunteers who have taken on this change and the many challenges that will be coming. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact Father John, Father Carvajal, Carey Auschwitz, CRE Coordinator, Everado Ramirez, Hispanic CRE Coordinator or Blythe Zielenski, HS Youth Coordinator. We are working diligently to make this transition as smooth as possible and ask for your prayers.