

FAQs – Archdiocese of Liverpool – April 2011

Here are a selection of possible Church newsletter topics to include in advance of the changes in the order of the Sacraments of Initiation in the Archdiocese. They are written as FAQs and include:

- Paragraphs with basic teachings about Confirmation and the Sacraments of Initiation that would be helpful for parishioners. Please write your own if you do not want to use those that follow.
- It is also possible to quote directly from the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*. in question and answer format, or directly from the *Catechism*.

Compendium references: 251 – 294

Catechism references: 1210 - 1419

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Family Catechesis?

Parents are the first teachers of their children in faith. Family catechesis is a method of catechesis that supports the ‘domestic church’ by assisting parents in leading their own children in the lifelong call to holiness within the community of the church.

In *Verbum Domini* Pope Benedict XVI stresses:

The great mystery of marriage is the source of the essential *responsibility of parents towards their children*. Part of authentic parenthood is to pass on and bear witness to the meaning of life in Christ: through their fidelity and the unity of family life, spouses are the first to proclaim God’s word to their children. The ecclesial community must support and assist them in fostering family prayer, attentive hearing of the word of God, and knowledge of the Bible. To this end the Synod urged that *every household have its Bible*, to be kept in a worthy place and used for reading and prayer. Whatever help is needed in this regard can be provided by priests, deacons and a well-prepared laity. The Synod also recommended the formation of small communities of families, where common prayer and meditation on passages of Scripture can be cultivated.^[286] Spouses should also remember that “the Word of God is a precious support amid the difficulties which arise in marriage and in family life”.^[287]

What are the Sacraments of Initiation?

The Sacraments of Initiation are Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. These three sacraments make up the process of belonging to the Church.

How do adults receive the Sacraments of Initiation?

When adults are welcomed into the church through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) they always receive Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist in this order.

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What is the Restored Order?

Children in the Archdiocese of Liverpool will receive Confirmation in the restored order from September 2012. This means that they will be confirmed before receiving their First Holy Communion at the same Mass. It is called the restored order because Christians were confirmed before their First Communion for many centuries. Also, adults are always welcomed into the church following the order of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. Confirmation, then, is preparation for Eucharist.

What do we receive in Baptism?

We receive baptismal grace.

Baptism is an indelible spiritual mark which seals a person to Christ forever. It is indelible because it cannot be removed and spiritual because we cannot “see” someone’s Baptism just by looking at that person. Baptism forgives original sin, gives the grace to believe in God, to hope in him and to love him. We are baptized into a community of believers, the Church. Confirmation completes the grace received at Baptism. God says ‘you are my child, I give you my spirit’. He never takes back his word.

Why be confirmed?

Confirmation is a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit like at Pentecost. This outpouring produces a growth in the grace we received at Baptism. We become closer to Christ and to His Church. Confirmation makes us a witness to the Faith. Confirmation is a confirming of our Baptismal grace, not our choice to ‘confirm’ our faith as an adult.

Who can be confirmed?

Any Christian in danger of death can be confirmed, including little babies. A candidate for Confirmation who has attained the age of reason (about age 7) can be confirmed if they profess their faith, are in a state of grace, want the sacrament, and are prepared to witness to their faith in the Church and in the world. Adults are confirmed when they are welcomed into the church through Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.

What happens at Confirmation?

The essential rite of Confirmation is anointing on the forehead of the baptized person with sacred chrism, together with the laying on of the Bishop’s or priest’s hands and the words ‘Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit.’

Can a priest confirm?

The ordinary minister of Confirmation is the Bishop, but in certain circumstances, a priest is allowed to confirm using holy oil (Chrism) consecrated by the Bishop.

How is the Eucharist unique among the Sacraments of Initiation?

The Holy Eucharist completes initiation. We are born anew by Baptism, strengthened by Confirmation and nourished by the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the source and summit of Christian life. All the other sacraments are ordered to the Eucharist.

I was confirmed after my First Communion? Why are these changes necessary?

The changes in the order of the Sacraments of Initiation are meant to help us understand that sacraments are gifts of God's grace, not something that we earn. Pope Benedict XVI has asked in his encyclical *Sacramentum Caritatis* for Catholics to understand that the Eucharist (and not Confirmation) is the summit of the Sacraments of Initiation. Restoring the order of the Sacraments of Initiation shows that all sacraments are ordered to the Eucharist, the 'sacrament of sacraments.'

Isn't Confirmation the teenage sacrament?

Many of us were confirmed as teenagers, so we may think of the sacrament of Confirmation as something reserved for young people. But the Catechism states that the 'age of discretion' (about age 7) is a reference point for receiving Confirmation unless a child is in danger of death. Pope John Paul II insisted that Confirmation, even if it is delayed to the teenage years, must be appreciated as a celebration of the gift of the Holy Spirit and not confused with an opportunity for young people to make a commitment to their faith.