

Dear Parents and Parishioners,

In baptism, your child was claimed by our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, became a child of God and a member of the Catholic Church; growing in and learning of the love of God in the “first school of faith, the family.” As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states: The Christian home is the place where children receive the first proclamation of the faith. For this reason, the family home is rightly called ‘the domestic church,’ a community of grace and prayer, a school of human virtues and of Christian charity” (CCC §. 1666).

When your child became of school age, the Church provided religious instruction through the parish religious education program or our parish school. This formation in faith includes sacramental preparation for First Penance, First Holy Communion and Confirmation. The primary object of this catechesis is to help form your child into an intimate communion with Jesus Christ by knowing, loving and serving Him in this world to be happy with Him for all eternity. This education in conjunction with the domestic church is more than simply learning about Jesus; it is a spiritual formation which challenges your child to become a model of the faith and a disciple of Christ for his/her lifetime. The Sacrament of Confirmation gives grace for the spiritual journey.

Over the past two years, the Archdiocese conducted a study regarding the grades for Confirmation. Overwhelmingly, bishops, pastors, principals and directors of religious education noted there is a much better understanding of the Sacrament of Confirmation by older grade school students.

On June 29, 2017, after a presentation of the results of this study, the Council of Priests voted almost unanimously for the standard grade for the Sacrament of Confirmation to be grades 7 and/or 8 in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Over the summer, a consultation with the priests of the Archdiocese was conducted. This consultation supported the June 29th decision and on September 21, 2017 the Council of Priests again voted in favor of this change from the practice of Confirmation in grades 4, 5 or 6. On January 18, 2018, the Archbishop determined with the Council of Priests, that the new grades for the Sacrament of Confirmation are 7th and/or 8th grade.

Therefore, beginning in the 2018-2019 school year, only those parishes which presently confirm in Grades 7 and/or 8 will celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation. Parishes which presently confirm in Grades 4, 5, or 6 have been directed to adjust their schedule according to the time table attached to this letter.

As your pastor, it is my desire for your child to be spiritually equipped to face the challenges of this world and bear witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I am confident that this change, with your familial support, will allow for a deeper apprenticeship in the faith and stronger relationship with God for your child.

Faithfully,

Rev. Msgr. David Diamond