



Within our Sacramental program is an exciting opportunity for families to connect with their faith together by diving in deeper to explore beyond the everyday. Christ gave us the Sacraments to help unite us with God the Father. The Sacraments themselves are all outward, visible signs of God's loving grace. The aim of Sacramental preparation is to ready us to receive those very special graces.

As you have been learning, our bishop has been called to change the timing of some of our parish Sacramental programs, bringing the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Eucharist) back to what is referred to as *Restored Order*; that is, in the order they were originally received. This puts the Holy Eucharist in its rightful place as the highpoint of Sacramental life. Although there is often comfort in the familiar and change can be challenging, we are not alone. Restored Order will be the Sacramental practice throughout the Diocese of Manchester and has already been common practice in several dioceses around the U.S. including our neighbors in Maine.

Practically speaking, this means that starting in 2019, children in the third grade will receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.

What about our children between third grade and high school who have yet to be Confirmed? Our staff has developed a transition plan that will provide faith formation and Sacramental preparation for these children.

Following is the St. John Neumann transition plan. Please note that during this period, if families have children in multiple grades involved in the transition that are reasonably close in age, they may choose to have their children receive Confirmation together. In order to make Sacramental preparation age appropriate, we will work with those families to provide the necessary formation. Of course families are welcome to keep children within their transition schedule as well.

Parent meetings will be held at the start of the new school year in the Fall to address individual grade programs.

Confirmation:

Fall 2018

Grades 9 & 10 Confirmation (current 8th grade & high schoolers who are presently participating in Confirmation preparation classes)

Spring 2019

Grade 3 Confirmation (current 2nd graders)

Fall 2019

Grades 7, 8, & 9 Confirmation (current 5, 6, & 7 graders)

Spring 2020

Grade 3 Confirmation and First Holy Communion at the same celebration (current 1st graders)

Fall 2020

Grade 6 & 7 Confirmation (current 3rd & 4th graders)

Confirmation & First Holy Communion:

2021+

Transition is complete; Grade 3 Confirmation and First Holy Communion will be received at the same celebration going forward

*Please understand that the Rite of Confirmation is scheduled by the bishop's office and subject to his schedule. The Spring/Fall celebrations provide general guidelines.

Reconciliation - a Sacrament of Healing:

To be received in the Spring of 2nd grade

As part of Sacramental preparation for second and third graders, parish staff will introduce lessons during some of the regular class times that families will complete at home. Confirmation classes will be provided for the transition grades (current 3rd through 7th grades).

We will work with children in developmentally appropriate ways. The previous high school Confirmation program cannot be "watered down" for second and third graders. We must meet the children where they are in their faith formation. Of course some of the special attributes of our high school program – works of mercy, retreats, mentoring opportunities – will continue to be available for those youth through the high school faith formation programs.

As you've heard many times, Confirmation is not an ending or a graduation, and this is true no matter what the age of the Confirmed. St. John Neumann Catholic Community will provide faith formation for elementary, middle school, and high school students after Confirmation to support children and youth in their faith journey as they mature. In addition, we will have opportunities for family faith formation as it is well known that our faith foundation begins at home. And as always, we will provide ongoing adult faith formation opportunities.

We are blessed to support our families in your faith journey! And we welcome opportunities to serve and grow with you.

Prayer for the Diocesan Initiative Restore, Renew, Proclaim: the Hope that is Christ

God of all life, through the resurrection of Jesus, Your Son, You restored the promise of eternal life to us, whom You love from our first moment of life and for life without end. Send Your Holy Spirit into our hearts to renew our faith, hope and charity. Stir up within us the desire to know, love and serve you more each day so that our words and deeds will proclaim the hope that is Christ. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.