



Questions about Restored Order of the Sacraments of Initiation

Strengthening Faith Formation in the Diocese of Manchester

There are many questions that come to mind about Restored Order, in this addition, some of the basic questions are answered.

What are the Sacraments of Initiation?

The Sacraments of Christian Initiation – Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist – lay the foundations of every Christian life. The sharing in the divine nature given to men through the grace of Christ bears a certain likeness to the origin, development, and nourishing of natural life. The faithful are born anew by Baptism, strengthened by the sacrament of Confirmation, and receive in the Eucharist the food for eternal life. By means of these Sacraments of Christian Initiation, they thus receive in increasing measure the treasures of the divine life and advance toward the perfection of charity. (Catechism of the Catholic Church number 1212)

Why Restore the Order of the Sacraments of Initiation?

From the foundation of the Church, the Sacraments of Initiation were celebrated in one liturgy received by adults, initiated by the Bishop. Then, in the 4th century, the church instituted a new rite of baptism for infants celebrated by the local deacon or priest. Thus, the reception of Confirmation was administered by the Bishop in one's adolescent years, and the Eucharist in the mid-teenage years. This practice was followed throughout the Church for many centuries. In the early 20th century, Pope Pius X lowered the age of Eucharist to seven, in which many dioceses moved the reception of Confirmation as well. In the United States, most dioceses remained with Confirmation in the teenage years. Over the last several years, dioceses have been moving Confirmation before that of Eucharist, which will take place here in the Diocese of Manchester, moving Confirmation before Eucharist in the same celebration in the third grade.

What are the benefits of restored order?

First, it will highlight that the Eucharist, not Confirmation, is the culmination of Christian initiation. Secondly, the reception of grace given by the Holy Spirit at a younger age, will give children a greater courage and guidance in facing the increasing difficulties of living a Christian life. Lastly, it will allow more opportunities for parents to take their rightful place as the primary educators of faith formation in the home. It also places the sacramental preparation at an age when children are naturally more open and receptive to participating with their parents.

How can a child make an adult commitment?

Fear not. We are never 100% ready to receive any of the Sacraments, but rather we are called to enter into the mystery of the Sacrament. When one enters freely into a sacrament, they receive the fullness of God's grace. Therefore, as one receives a sacrament, God gives us the grace to respond to the Sacrament in how one lives out their life going forward. For example, when one is Confirmed, the person is given the grace to live as a disciple of Jesus by entering into the desire to continue to learn and grow in their relationship with Jesus, to participate in the community life of the parish, and to live a life of sharing in God's love with others in their vocation.

What about Faith Formation?

One cannot stop learning about the faith and about the love of Jesus. When parents present their child for baptism, they state to the priest or deacon, along with the entire community, the Church, that they will be a witness of faith to their child, teaching them about the faith from the moment they emerge from the baptismal font which begins one's faith journey. The vocation of a parent is to get their child to heaven. Therefore, our homes should be a place where growth and holiness can take place. The family becomes a unique church at home commonly called the 'Domestic Church.' It is in the home that one is formed into the love of Jesus by praying together, learning the faith and reading Scripture, learning about the lives of the Saints, and learning life's lessons as a family. A group of Domestic Churches make up the Institutional Church, or what one might call their parish. It is in the parish family that all gather together to worship through the Sacraments, share in their experiences about the faith, continue to be formed in the faith through programs for all ages, share in communal meals, social activities, and participate in outreach to those in need.

What about Faith Formation?

As a parish community here at St. John Neumann, our goal is to help form faithful disciples who are centered on the Eucharistic Feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, in all that we do as a community, our worship and programs facilitate a deepening of faith, which is called to be brought home, and unpacked in one's daily life.

Here at St. John Neumann, we offer formation opportunities from toddlers through adulthood and all are welcome to enter in and participate. Some programs are age specific, but most are open to all. As the age of Confirmation is lowered in our diocese, all children and youth, along with their families are encouraged to continue to actively participate in our programs, whether it is in our new family based program called 'Bringing God Home,' (starting fall of 2018, handout 5 will have more information), Edge (Middle School Youth Group), Life Teen (High School Youth group), general catechesis classes, retreats, and outreach service projects. With the reception of Confirmation, it is not an end, but rather a response to the promptings of the Holy Spirit to grow in holiness daily.