



What is Restored Order?

Each of us was created for no other reason than to be with God forever in heaven. The Sacraments are given by God through the Church to help make us holy and to give us the tools we need to be saints and to get to heaven. This is called grace and is necessary for salvation. The Seven Sacraments can be grouped into three categories, the Sacraments of Initiation, the Sacraments of Healing, and the Sacraments at the Service of Communion. In this short article, we will be talking about the Sacraments of Initiation, which welcome us into the full life of the Church. They are: Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist.

Through Baptism, we are born again into the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. We are cleansed of original sin, made adopted sons and daughters of God, and are joined to the Body of Christ, the Church. In Baptism, we receive the Holy Spirit who dwells within us forever. Baptism changes who we are as persons, to such a degree that it can never be repeated or undone. A person who is baptized is claimed forever by Christ. The Sacrament of Confirmation completes the graces given at Baptism. Through Confirmation, an individual is sealed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Confirmation, like Baptism, changes the person who receives it in such a way that it can never be repeated or undone. Historically, the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation were originally celebrated at the same time by a bishop. As more and more people entered the Church and it was not possible for the bishop to celebrate these sacraments for everyone, the two celebrations became separated with the parish priest or deacon usually celebrating Baptism but the sealing of the Spirit at Confirmation was still usually reserved for the bishop to celebrate. In receiving the Eucharist, a Catholic truly receives the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity, of Jesus under what appears to be bread and wine. Through the Sacraments of Initiation, we fully enter into the saving mystery of the Church of Christ.

For the past several decades, the trend and practice in the United States was to be baptized as an infant (or as soon as possible), to receive First Holy Communion at around age 7-10, and to receive Confirmation sometime later, usually in high school. In the two thousand year history of the Church, however, this ordering was unique. For most generations of Catholics throughout time, they were baptized, *then* confirmed, and *then* received the Eucharist, in that order, and became fully initiated members of the Church. The order we are used to, Baptism-First Eucharist-Confirmation, only began about a century ago when the age for First Holy Communion was lowered to encourage more frequent reception.

Bishop Peter Libasci, Bishop of Manchester, is calling our Diocese to restore the traditional order of the Sacraments of Initiation to the original Baptism-Confirmation-Eucharist sequence. This initiative is called “Restore-Renew-Proclaim.” Starting next year, all parishes in the Diocese will begin to confirm students in the third grade. Children who have not yet received their First Holy Communion will also receive that sacrament at the same Mass as Confirmation. Over the next 4 years, all other children and youth who have not yet received Confirmation will receive it, so that by the year 2021 the norm will be for a child to receive Confirmation and First Communion in the third grade. This restoration of the traditional order of the Sacraments of Initiation is called Restored Order. Several other dioceses in the United States have adopted the Restored Order model, and many more will do so in the coming years. Over the following weeks, we will be offering other handouts on different aspects of the Restored Order in the Diocese of Manchester, including the grade level transition plan for our parish. Please spend time with these handouts and feel free to bring your questions, comments, and concerns, to the St. John Neumann Parish staff.