



# Faith Formation at St. Mark the Evangelist

## What is happening?

The Diocese of Manchester is launching an initiative to strengthen faith formation in our parishes and schools. It is called **Restore, Renew, Proclaim the Hope that Is Christ**. The goal of this initiative is to make lifelong faith formation a priority and a reality in all our parishes.

To accomplish this, we will be looking at ways to strengthen our youth ministry and adult faith formation processes, as well as reimagining our sacramental preparation programs. At the heart of all this is a desire to form disciples of all ages.

## What does this have to do with Confirmation?

Over the next few years, the standard age of Confirmation is going to be third grade throughout the Diocese of Manchester, and Confirmation will be celebrated before, not after, First Communion. This practice restores Confirmation to its original place. Through this process, the three Sacraments of Christian Initiation return to the logical order in which they were designed to be received: first Baptism, then Confirmation, then Eucharist. It also restores the practice of administering the Sacraments of Christian Initiation to young children as early as possible.

## How can a Third Grader understand Confirmation?

*Confirmation is NOT a Sacrament of Maturity in the Faith,  
nor does it imply an adult commitment to the faith.*

For quite some time, many Catholics have referred to the sacrament of Confirmation as kind of a rite of passage in the faith. Confirmation is, and has always been, a sacrament of initiation, not transition or graduation. We do not confirm our faith in the sacrament of Confirmation. It is not about what we do, but it is about the work of God.

## Where can I get more information on these changes?

For more information on the theological and practical reasoning for this initiative, as well as resources from other Catholic communities who have implemented Restored Order, please visit **Catholicnh.org**. Scroll over the 'Parishes' tab and click on 'Lifelong Faith Formation.'

## What are we doing here at St. Mark's?

The implications of these changes mean that the structure of Religious Education that we have been accustomed to for many years is changing. In the long-term, we are focusing on age appropriate Catholic education programs and opportunities for our entire community. Rediscovering and growing in our Faith as a parish family not only strengthens and invigorates us, it emboldens our evangelization of the Gospel to our neighbors and the whole world! Here at St. Mark's this will include Whole Community Catechesis, Family Programs, Comprehensive Youth Ministry for Middle School and High School students, and continued opportunities for Adult Faith Formation.

A major emphasis of these changes is the importance of the 'domestic Church' - that parents are the first and foremost teachers of the Faith in their families. By expanding the existing Religious Education format beyond childhood and adolescence to a model of Lifelong Faith Formation, we hope to provide the necessary tools and resources to parents in order for them to confidently accompany the efforts of the Church in our roles as religious educators.

Our immediate focus is to comply with the Diocesan mandate to prepare all grade school through high school students to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation by 2020. This includes preparation for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and First Communion if the child has not yet received them.

### So, when exactly is my child being Confirmed?

At the time of this publication (March 2018), *we do not have any scheduled Confirmation dates*. Since the Bishop is the ordinary administrator of the Sacrament, all parishes are informed by the Diocese when the Bishop will be coming. We have been asked to provide an estimate on how many Confirmation services our community will need in order to complete the transition by the requested deadline. We will inform everyone of the scheduled dates as soon as we receive them! In the meantime, it is critical to start preparing our youth to receive the Sacrament.

#### ***Our Projected Timeline:***

Current Confirmation Students (9th @ 10th Grade): Confirmed Fall of 2018

Students entering Grades 3, 7, 8, 9 in the 2018/19 School Year: Confirmed **2018/19** School Year

Students entering Grades 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 in 2018/19 School Year: Confirmed **2019/20** School Year

### I have children in different grades, can they be Confirmed together?

We are going to do our best to accommodate families with children of different age levels to receive Confirmation together. We understand that the reception of the Sacraments for the first time is cause for families to gather in celebration. This may be cumbersome for some families if they are required to attend multiple Confirmation services in a two year span. Please notify us if your family needs this consideration and we will put forth every effort to accommodate your requests. We kindly ask for your patience and understanding as we figure out logistics, as the maximum occupancy of our Church is 320 people.

## Are there any requirements for Confirmation?

The only requirements to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation are that the candidate be baptized, Catholic, and that those responsible for the religious education of the parish community determine that the candidate reasonably recognizes the significance of the Sacrament they are to receive. The Diocese also requires that some sort of immediate Sacramental Preparation is administered in order to establish this knowledge.

A year prior to the announcement of the Restored Order initiative (2016), the Bishop of Manchester *removed all service requirements as prerequisites to receive Confirmation*. Candidates, and all the Christian faithful, are encouraged to perform works of mercy as integrated acts of Christian discipleship. This speaks to the truth that the Grace of the Sacraments is not something to be earned or rewarded, but a reality that we are freely invited to participate in.

### In order for your child to be Confirmed...

1. ***We must confirm that your child is baptized.*** If your child was baptized here at St. Mark's, we have the records we need already. If your child was baptized elsewhere, we request that you contact the church of baptism and request that a copy of your child's baptismal record be sent to the Parish Office. There is no fee associated with this request.
2. ***Your child must complete a course of Sacramental Preparation.*** At St. Mark's we are providing various options to accomplish this over the next two years.
  - \* Our annual Summer Religious Education program will take place July 9 - 13, 2018. The focus of this week will be Sacramental Preparation for all grade levels.
  - \* During the 2018/19 School Year, we will be offering an equivalent course of Sacramental Preparation one Tuesday evening a month for five months. Please see the schedule attached for more details.
  - \* Middle School and High School candidates will have the opportunity to participate in various events and programs as part of our forthcoming Comprehensive Youth Ministry Program as a means of Sacramental Preparation. More details will be available in the coming weeks.
  - \* In the scenario that none of these options are a possibility for your family, we will take into consideration on an individual basis crafting alternative means to prepare your child to receive Confirmation. These considerations will vary according to necessity, and the methods will vary according to grade level.
3. ***Confirmation candidates require a sponsor.*** This person serves as a witness to the readiness of the candidate and as a mentor in their preparation to receive the Sacrament. The sponsor must be 16 years of age or older, and have been Confirmed in the Catholic Church.

## Will participation in the new Whole Community Program count as preparation?

No. The concept of our Whole Community Catechesis program is to expand Religious Education across the whole spectrum of generations that compose our St. Mark's family. While there will certainly be a dynamic of age-appropriate 'break-outs,' the intent of the program is to include all participants in a common theme, regardless of age or family composition. With this in mind, specific preparation for the reception of the Sacraments of Initiation would fall outside of the Whole Community curriculum. We encourage all families to participate in this new and exciting program that we are launching in September, however it will not suffice as an alternative for Sacramental Preparation.

# Join Us!

## **SUMMER FAITH FORMATION PROGRAM**

Monday July 9 thru  
Friday July 13

9:00 - 12:00

Cost: \$65 per student

## **SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION**

Grades 2 - 5

Tuesdays 5:00 - 6:30 PM

2018

October 16

November 13

2019

January 15

February 12

March 12

Cost: \$65 per student

## **VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL**

Monday June 25 thru  
Friday June 29

9:00 - 12:00

Cost: \$35 per student

*To Register for programs,  
please visit the St. Mark's  
Welcome Center, or visit our  
website at [stmarksnh.org](http://stmarksnh.org) to  
download a registration form.  
You may also register at the  
Parish Office, Monday through  
Friday from 9:30 - 4:00.  
Cash, Check, and Credit/Debit  
accepted.  
Please make checks out to  
St. Mark the Evangelist.*

If financial circumstances are prohibiting your family from participating in any St. Mark's event, please contact Fr. Mike.

[stmarksnh.org](http://stmarksnh.org)



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