

**EUCCHARIST**

**CONFIRMATION**

**BAPTISM**

## THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

Recently our Diocese implemented what is commonly called the “Restored Order” of the Sacraments. I’d like to take a few minutes to explain what this means so we all have a common understanding.

In the early days of the Church there was one rite to make Christians, always presided over by a Bishop. *Water* was the *primary* symbol used in baptism, but at the end of the rite of baptism, there was an added ritual with *anointing* with *oil* called CHRISMATION and then the newly baptized would come to the table of Eucharist (*Precious Blood for infants*). There were three distinct ritual moments in one initiatory celebration. Penance didn’t enter in until much later.

Constantine made Christianity the official religious of the Roman Empire in the Fourth Century, and because of that many people were being initiated, so many in fact that the Bishop couldn’t do them all, so he delegated priests to baptize, BUT only he could “supply the Spirit” through Chrismation, now known as Confirmation.

*(Move the boxes marked Eucharist and Confirmation to the second table).* Thus, we have the first separation of the sacraments of initiation.

This separation may have been days or weeks or even months, but over time it became longer and longer and longer...so that infants who were baptized would not be confirmed until they were 8, 9, 16 years of age. BUT, no one could come to the table to Eucharist until AFTER they were confirmed. Eucharist was and is the culmination of the sacraments of initiation. Baptism ONCE. Confirmation ONCE. Eucharist REPEATABLE, so that what we received in Baptism and Confirmation will be nourished and strengthened throughout our lives.

Thus, what is now called Confirmation, traditionally a simple rite at the end of Baptism sealing Baptism and calling forth the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, took on new meanings.

So, back to the beginning: Since in Baptism SINS are forgiven, the person was in the state of grace for the reception of Confirmation and Eucharist, now that baptism was removed so far from Confirmation and Eucharist, in order that the one being confirmed would be in the state of grace, PENANCE enters in the sequence. *(Move the boxes marked Eucharist and Confirmation to the third table, put the box marked Penance on the second table).*

**Penance**

In the Middle Ages and affirmed by the 16<sup>th</sup> century Council of Trent, Confirmation began to take on new meanings. Since those being confirmed were now at or beyond the age of reason, they could “speak for themselves”; they would be an “adult” member of the Church; they would become a “soldier for Christ” (even being slapped on the cheek by the Bishop after the anointing.) It became like a rite of passage, a Christian *bar* or *bat Mizpah*. Instead of being understood as a sacrament of INITIATION, it became a sacrament of COMPLETION. That’s not at all how it was intended.

Now comes Pope Pius X in 1910 and declares that children should not be deprived of the Eucharist and should receive it at an early age, EVEN IF THEY HAVEN’T BEEN

CONFIRMED! Prior to 1910, no one could receive Communion unless they were already baptized and confirmed.

*(Move the boxes marked Eucharist to the fourth table).*

Pope St. John XXIII convened the SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL in the late 1950's and called for the revision or restoration of the sacraments. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults was brought back into use so that anyone of the age of reason, 7, or older who desired baptism would receive all three sacraments of initiation in the same ceremony, usually at the Easter Vigil.

This restoration of the RCIA prompted some Bishops to look at the history of the sacraments that I just shared with you and implement the "restored order" for those baptized in infancy

**The Church is not introducing something NEW, but rather restoring something very old.**

*(Move the boxes marked Eucharist and Confirmation back to the third table).*

**BAPTISM...ONLY ONCE**

**(PENANCE)...REPEATABLE**

**CONFIRMATION...ONLY ONCE**

**EUCHARIST...REPEATABLE...AFFIRMS/REAFFIRMS BAPTISM COMMITMENT**

**WE SHOULD NEVER HOLD CONFIRMATION "HOSTAGE" TO KEEP KIDS IN RELIGIOUS ED. It is a free gift; we don't earn it. But we must be prepared in an age-appropriate way.** The gifts of the Spirit will continue to unfold throughout the lives of our children being confirmed. Gifts of WISDOM, UNDERSTANDING, COUNSEL, FORTITUDE, KNOWLEDGE, PIETY, FEAR OF THE LORD.

CHILDREN NEED THESE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT NOW MORE THAN EVER AS THEY FACE THE WORLD WITH ALL ITS TEMPTATIONS and FIGHT THE DEVIL IN ALL HIS CUNNING.

Some ask, "Why should we celebrate Confirmation at such an early age?"

My response, "Why wouldn't we?"