

Diocese of Des Moines

*A Journey Together
Celebrating Evangelization:
Past, Present and Future*

Diocese of Des Moines Age for the Conferral of the Sacrament of Confirmation

December 28, 2010

My friends in the Community of the Diocese of Des Moines:

At the October 26, 2010 meeting of the Presbyteral Council of the Diocese of Des Moines, the following resolution was unanimously adopted.

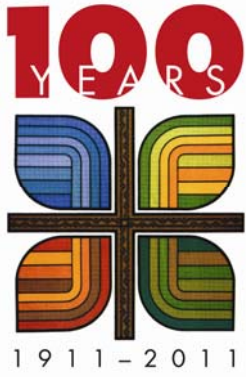
“The Diocese of Des Moines will change the age of receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation to the sophomore year of high school (generally 16 years of age or older) beginning in the Fall of 2012.

The last possible date for the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation for students in the 8th Grade will be June 30, 2012.”

This particular determination had slowly evolved after informal conversation and consultation with the priests of the various regions based on discussions with staff, catechists, parents and students in their local settings.

The discussions eventually focused on what age is in the best pastoral interest of the confirmation candidates. Always to be acknowledged is the fact that the grace of the sacrament is effective. But from the point of view of the recipient at what age is that person from a subjective, personal perspective most open to that grace?

Our consultations led to the conclusion that during high school years, maturity and insight are sufficiently developed that there is a readiness to welcome the reception of the grace of the Sacrament. This reception occurs in such a way that the person incorporates the grace in a heightened, intentional manner on the journey of faith. Such an openness has been clearly demonstrated to me in the ten years I have been privileged to confer the Sacrament of Confirmation as Bishop.



Diocese of Des Moines

*A Journey Together
Celebrating Evangelization:
Past, Present and Future*

Concerns raised about establishing the age of Confirmation for young people in high school, tenth grade and above, have generally been in the practical realm. It was observed that young people in high school are very busy; it will mean more direct involvement and push by parents; it will mean a re-organization of entrenched programs and habits; it will mean more involvement of our young people in their home parishes.

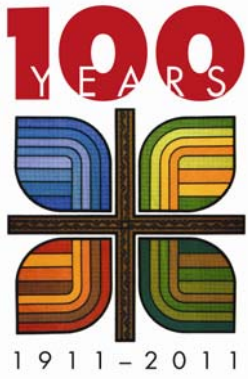
Paradoxically, these concerns can be seen as positively contributing to having high school as the age for Confirmation. All of us recognize the importance of communicating, strengthening and cultivating faith during high school years. It is vital. It is life-giving. It will have life-long impact. I believe we must give the development of faith the priority it merits and thus enable it to be incorporated at the top of the array of high school priorities. Our purpose in all of this is to achieve what is best for our young people in view of the life choices that lay before them.

In light of the Presbyteral Council resolution and the discussion and conversation that preceded it, the Sacrament of Confirmation will be conferred in the Diocese of Des Moines in tenth grade and it will also be permitted to be conferred in eleventh and twelfth grades where pastorally advisable. This policy will take effect on July 1, 2012.

Some diocesan parishes are already celebrating the Sacrament of Confirmation in the high school age-range. Others are preparing to do so soon. They will serve as valuable models for the implementation of this policy. A great number of dioceses have such a practice in place. One the hurdles of implementation have been overcome, the practice has proven to be beneficial, well received and appreciated.

Situating Confirmation in this age-range coincides with the diocesan priority of implementing and, as the case may be, strengthening adolescent catechesis. Nation-wide, as is the case in the Diocese of Des Moines in various parishes, adolescent catechesis has room for significant improvement. Again, our motivation is to do the very best we can in communicating to our young people what is of most importance to us and hopefully to them.

As these changes proceed, I am pleased to assure you that the Department of Evangelization and Catechesis (Mr. John Gaffney and Dr. Cheryl Fournier) will be at the service of our diocesan parishes. Enclosed is a letter from the Department which outlines the guiding principles for developing this process in the local parish.



Diocese of Des Moines

*A Journey Together
Celebrating Evangelization:
Past, Present and Future*

The Catechism of the Catholic Church specifies the preparation which is expected for Confirmation and in so doing provides expectations for its outcome in the lives of our young people:

“Preparation for Confirmation should aim at leading the Christian towards a more intimate union with Christ and a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit... in order to be more capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities of Christian life. To this end catechesis for Confirmation should strive to awaken a sense of belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ, the universal Church as well as the parish community. The latter bears special responsibility for the preparation for confirmands.” (CCC-1309).

May the Holy Spirit be particularly present in guiding the Church of Des Moines in preparing our young people for this once in a lifetime experience.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ *Richard E Pates*

The Most Reverend Richard E. Pates
Bishop of Des Moines