



*“The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.” (John 14:26)*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

What an exciting occasion it is to journey with our young people towards Confirmation! In being sealed with the Holy Spirit, the Sacrament of Confirmation (along with Baptism and the Eucharist) completes their initiation into the Church.

The reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for the strengthening and perfection of baptismal grace to grow in holiness and to be missioned as a more active witness for Christ in the Church and the world. In strengthening the gifts of the Holy Spirit received in Baptism, Confirmation deepens the commitment to Christ and to living and proclaiming the gospel boldly in words accompanied by deeds. The candidates are empowered by the Holy Spirit to live an active faith that is continuously nourished by the Eucharist.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us that, “preparation for Confirmation should aim at leading the Christian toward a more intimate union with Christ and a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit - his actions, his gifts, and his biddings - 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 of confirmands” (n. 1309).

It is deep love for our candidates that compels us to offer the very best opportunity to encounter Jesus in a personal way in the Church as they prepare for Confirmation. We are investing in our youth by providing a more comprehensive formation journey, which will help our candidates encounter and re-encounter Christ and prepare them for a deeper engagement in the mission. To that end, I am enthusiastic about our updated formation for Confirmation, which begins no sooner than grade 8 and continues in grade 9 or beyond. The formation process focuses on a personal encounter with Jesus in Year 1 (*Alpha Youth Series*) and follows in the second part of Year 1 and into Year 2 with deeper catechesis rooted in the primacy of evangelization (choice of Dynamic Catholic’s *Decision Point* or Ascension Press’ *Chosen*). Each of these programs has sound catechesis and proven effectiveness in leading youth to encountering Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is my prayer that by offering this extended formation, our young people will complete their formation and be propelled into society, empowered by the Holy Spirit, ready to share the good news of God’s love with joyful zeal.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 767 states: “*The Church in her very nature is missionary, sent by Christ to all nations to make disciples of them.*” In fact, the Church exists to evangelize – to share the good news of Jesus Christ with everyone. Pope Francis reminds us that, “unless we see [Jesus] present at the heart of our missionary commitment, our enthusiasm soon wanes, and we are no longer sure of what it is that we are handing on; we lack vigour and passion. A person who is not convinced, enthusiastic, certain and in love, will convince nobody.” (Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 266.)

The entire faith community (parish priest, religious education coordinators, catechists, parents, sponsors, and parishioners) plays a significant role in accompanying our young people towards the sacrament. We want the very best for our candidates – to lead them to a true encounter with Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit. As we support our young people on their journey, we too can deepen our own encounter with Christ. Confirmation is a sacrament for the whole church! It is the sacrament that strengthens each of us in this fundamental identity of being intentional disciples of Christ who are permanently engaged in the mission.

Our relationship with God reminds us that life is not just about this present moment: it is a constant journey towards our eternal destiny – to live in a communion of love with God and one another now and for all eternity in heaven. Mindful of this we accompany our young people with great joy, full of anticipation for what the Lord will do for them and for the wider Church through the graces of this sacrament.

Be assured of my prayers for all of those preparing for Confirmation and for all who help prepare them. Come Holy Spirit!

Our Lady, Star of the New Evangelization and Spouse of the Holy Spirit – Pray for us!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christian Riesbeck". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Most Rev. Christian Riesbeck, CC  
Bishop of Saint John

March 15, 2021