

August 18, 2021

Dear Parents and Confirmation Candidates,

Welcome to our newly formed Confirmation preparation program for 2022! I hope that you will find it rewarding, not just in terms of the adjusted time commitments but in the way that it patterns these candidates into deeper faith. Like everything else these days, our formation program will need to be adjusted due to pandemic concerns in order to keep everyone safe. Still, our more vibrant program this year could actually become a blessing as your teen prepares for this sacrament. Church is all about relationship and the social distancing forced upon us in the previous year and a half may actually help us to “confirm” the essential nature of relationship and our discipleship to the Lord.

Sacraments aren't meant to be religious merit badges; the rites of the Church are actually meant to *affect* us. Parents: When you decided to have your child baptized, you made a simple promise: to bring your child up in the *practice of the faith*. In other words: you found the Christian message so compelling that you wanted to share that faith-tradition with your child. That's why, at this point in their spiritual life, I guess we should take the time to assess the situation. To both parents and you 8th graders: Is this actually happening? Is your faith growing or waning?

My encouragement to you parents is this: Don't give up your responsibility to “bring your child up in the practice of the faith.” And for you candidates, I encourage you to open yourself to being challenged to live a life of faith because the formation you'll be undertaking this year has the potential of challenging the ways the culture wants to “form” you. Make no mistake: you will be formed one way or another – either by the Lord or by the culture around you – it's just a question of who's doing the forming. So take a good look at yourself at this point in your life: Are you more depressed about your future because of this “hiccup” in your plans? Does it make you feel more hopeless about your future? Are you becoming angry, bitter, cynical – dragging others down into the darkness you feel? Or: Are you more reflective now about what truly matters in life? Have you been drawn more deeply to the suffering of others because you yourself have had to suffer? Have you been drawn into a bigger place because of the smallness all around you? You will be formed, one way or another.

I urge you to use this time to pattern yourself in some form of public service, volunteerism, spiritual reading, serious conversation with other candidates, your sponsors, and your parents – take time for personal prayer too – or, preferably, all of the above. You have much to gain and nothing to lose. Nothing at all. And with you on fire, the world has nothing to lose – and everything to gain. And know that you will not be alone in this. The parishioners, your family, and friends and all of us will be holding you in our prayers in the months ahead, hoping that you will take our faith tradition and make it your own. Let us know how we can help you during this ‘exploration’ year. We look forward to celebrating the fruit of your efforts with you on May 7th at the Cathedral.

With sincere gratefulness for your presence in our parish,

Father Paul