



CARDINAL'S OFFICE
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January 18, 2024

Dear Pastors, Parochial Vicars, and Parish and School Catechetical Leaders,

I wish to express my sincere thanks to all who participated in the extensive consultation we have conducted on a subject we all understand to be of great importance: How to strengthen the participation of young people and their families in the life of faith in Jesus Christ lived out in our parishes, schools, and communities.

Over the past several years, we consulted parents, young people, priests and deacons, other diocesan leaders, Catholic school faculty and leaders, and the faith formation teams in our parishes and cultural communities. The proposal I received was to change the typical age for the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation in our Archdiocese, moving from the current norm of 10th grade to a proposed norm of 8th grade, around the age of 13-14. Last fall, I brought this recommendation to the Presbyteral Council and asked council members to consult their vicariates.

In December, the Presbyteral Council made a nearly unanimous recommendation to change the age of confirmation to 8th grade. After careful consideration, I wish to announce to you today this new policy for the Archdiocese of Boston: The ordinary age for the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation is now 8th grade, around the age of 13-14.

It is very heartening to know how much interest there is in increasing the participation of our young people in the Church, as this process has revealed. I believe that the process itself also truly reflects the spirit of listening that Pope Francis has urged us to make a regular process of our life as an Archdiocese.

Clearly, it will take some time for parishes to fully implement this new policy, which should be done carefully over the next 2-3 years. The Secretariat for Evangelization and Discipleship, in coordination with the Catholic Schools Office, will assist parishes and schools developing and implementing the needed changes to their catechetical programs for Confirmation and with planning for additional Confirmation ceremonies during this initial period of transition.

The Office for Canonical Affairs will send pastors a copy of the Decree that makes this change to the Archdiocesan policy. The Decree will make clear that implementation of this policy over the next 2-3 years is at the discretion of the pastor, in consultation with those responsible for parish and school faith formation programs and with the parish or collaborative Pastoral Council. I encourage each parish to implement these changes in collaboration with other parishes and in communication with the Secretariat for Evangelization and Discipleship.

This important change is part of the larger mission that has been entrusted to Bishop-Elect Barbosa and his team in the Secretariat for Evangelization and Discipleship. The Secretariat supports parishes throughout the Archdiocese in enhancing faith formation initiatives for families and people of all ages in response to the ever-changing needs of the People of God.

I firmly believe that we will strengthen our 8th graders to handle the demands and challenges of adolescence by making the grace of this great Sacrament available to them. I extend my gratitude to everyone involved in the faith formation of our young people and to assure you all of my prayers.

Devotedly yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Sean O'Malley".

Archbishop of Boston

