



Office of the Bishop

DIOCESE OF SAINT JOHN

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New Journey to Confirmation

“Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’.” (John 20:21-22)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On the solemnity of Pentecost, we celebrate the coming of the Advocate, the Holy Spirit whom Jesus promised, to renew the Church and enkindle our missionary desire to share the Good News.

Over the past year, in consultation with the Religious Education Coordinators and the Council of Priests, we have discerned a new Confirmation formation for the Diocese of Saint John. This came about through much prayer, motivated by a sincere desire to help our youth become truly engaged and to become intentional missionary disciples. Two significant goals emerged from our prayerful reflection: a more comprehensive formation for Confirmation over two years, and a uniformity of school-age level for the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation across the diocese.

It is deep love for our candidates that compels us to offer them the very best. We are investing in our youth by providing a more comprehensive formation journey, which will help them encounter and re-encounter Christ and prepare them for a deeper engagement in the mission of the Church. To that end, I am enthusiastic about our updated formation for Confirmation, which begins in a more focused way in grade 8 and continues in grade 9 or beyond. It is my prayer that by investing more in their preparation, 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 and salvation with joyful zeal.

Our new formation process focuses on giving our youth the opportunity of a renewed personal encounter with Jesus in Year 1 (*Alpha Youth Series*), followed in the second part of Year 1 and into Year 2 by 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 and developing a deeper relationship with him in the Church, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Beginning this fall, formation for Confirmation will be implemented in the following way:

- Candidates in grade 8 will begin the full two-year formation. Beginning with the *Alpha Youth Series*, it will be followed by 24 sessions of either *Chosen* or *Decision Point*. The Sacrament of Confirmation will be conferred in the Easter season 2023.
- For the 2021-2022 academic year only, candidates entering grade 9 or beyond will be given a condensed formation for Confirmation so as not to delay Confirmation for these students. Beginning with the *Alpha Youth Series*, it will be followed by 12 condensed sessions of *Chosen* or *Decision Point* (two themes per session). The Sacrament of Confirmation will be conferred in the Easter season 2022.

I recognize for many parishes, an extended formation for the Sacrament of Confirmation may be a change to how formation is currently offered. While it is true that our young people could be spiritually ready to be confirmed before grade 9, it is important to choose one school-age level to have uniformity throughout the diocese. Grade 8-9 was chosen as the school-age level time frame for the completion of the Confirmation formation journey because it is a critical time in the life of a young person, when they could use additional support for their faith journey. We want to encourage and inspire our youth to develop their ongoing relationship with Jesus and be strengthened to be more fully engaged in the life and mission of the Church.

I express my deep gratitude especially to our religious education coordinators and catechists who are making an extra commitment to support our parents and sponsors on this journey and investing in the faith development of our youth, as we prepare them together for this important sacrament. Be assured of my sincere prayers as we begin this new endeavour, which I am convinced will help our young people to arrive on Confirmation day with hearts wide open to the Holy Spirit. Guided by this same Spirit may we joyfully embrace the role we have in the formation of our candidates for Confirmation, trusting the Lord to capture their hearts as missionary disciples on fire for Christ.

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 style with a cross at the beginning.

✠ Christian Riesbeck, CC
Bishop of Saint John

May 18, 2021