

Confirmation

The Easter Season is the perfect time to celebrate the sacraments of Initiation, which is why we are celebrating First Eucharist at all masses this weekend; welcoming younger members to the Table of the Lord for the first time. This coming Thursday and Friday, May 11 and 12, students from sixth grade through High School will receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.



However, there is a change in the order of the Sacraments coming soon to the Diocese of Phoenix. The Diocese has re-instated the **original sequence** of the Sacraments of Initiation; so soon everyone will receive the Sacrament of Confirmation **before** their First Communion.

Some have asked, “Why the change? Why has Bishop Olmsted decided to lower the age of confirmation to the age of First Eucharist?” The answer lies in history.

Originally, in the early second and third centuries, baptism was reserved for Adults and was received similarly to the current Rite of Christian Initiation. The deacon would baptize the person in a place away from the congregation, then bring them into the assembly to be welcomed. The Bishop would “confirm” the baptism, stating the he agreed that it had taken place and would seal it with the use of chrism, or oil, poured on their head. Then the newly baptized would be welcomed to the Table of the Eucharist for the first time. Therefore, the original sequence was Baptism, Confirmation and then Eucharist, all in one liturgy, very much like our Easter Vigil.

After Constantine made Christianity the official religion in 313, adults who were already baptized wanted their children to be incorporated into the community. Thus, baptism of infants became the norm. In the Roman Church, children waited to receive communion until they could understand more about the faith, so they received both Eucharist and Confirmation at about the age of 12, the age of reason in the middle ages. The Bishop would make the rounds of all the villages and towns once a year or so to confer the sacrament of Confirmation.

It was only in 1910 that Pope Pius X decided that children needed to receive the graces of Eucharist before the age of 12. He dropped the age of reason to 7 for reception of Eucharist, but didn’t move the age of Confirmation. So now, the Diocese is bringing the two sacraments back together to restore the original sequence and the complete initiation to the Table of Lord.

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