



August 15, 2022  
Assumption of Mary

### The Sacrament of Confirmation

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Dear Friends in Christ,

When Jesus first encounters Nicodemus, they quickly discuss what it means to be “born from above.” Jesus elaborates: “The wind blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit” (John 3:4-8).

As Catholic Christians, we believe it is in the Sacrament of Baptism that we are first “born from above.” We also believe that this Spirit mysteriously continues to blow into the hearts and minds of each of us. God wills that we continually deepen our relationship with Jesus enfolded by the personal love of the Holy Trinity. Here we can hear God’s unique call to us and witness to his Risen presence, his Kingdom among us. As Pope Francis says, we do not HAVE a mission; each of us IS a mission, sent by God.

The Holy Spirit is the source of this Kingdom life and our ability to give faithful witness. Jesus calls this gift the “Paraclete,” which can be translated as “advocate,” “comforter,” “consoler”—or in a more vivid translation: “the one who answers the call.” God is calling you. Will you answer? The Spirit helps us overcome our fears or reluctance to say, “Yes!”

The Sacrament of Confirmation, to be conferred in tenth grade or older in the Diocese of Des Moines, is a sacred moment when you are enabled to recognize and respond to God’s call. God’s Holy Spirit communicates seven significant gifts anticipated by the prophet Isaiah: Wisdom, Understanding, Knowledge, Piety/Devotion, Courage, Counsel, and the Obedient Love (versus enslaved fear) of an adopted daughter or son.

Preparation is key to experiencing the effects of the Sacrament. Guided by caring and dedicated adults who love you and believe in you, the ideal timeframe for preparation is two years. Three elements that constitute formation during this period are:

- More mature formation in the faith and what it means to live as a missionary disciple;

- Cultivation of a prayer life that emphasizes a personal relationship with Jesus as friend, Savior and Lord of Life. Well-planned retreats and other moments of personal encounter centered in the Eucharist (Mass, adoration) are vital in facilitating this growth in friendship and dependency on God.
- Service of others--especially the poor, the vulnerable, those at the margins of society--is companion to our participation in sacraments. As mutual members of the Body of Christ, we nourish life in others just as we are fed by Jesus himself.

Wherever possible, the small group approach is to be used for instruction since it establishes trust and facilitates meaning sharing and engagement for each confirmand.

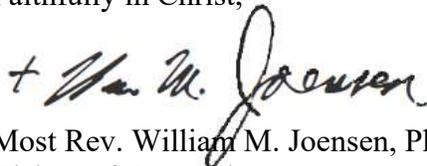
An opening prayer service at the beginning of the Confirmation preparation process will introduce the upcoming journey and each of its phases. The grace of the Sacrament of Reconciliation—itsself a renewal of one’s baptism--should be promoted and made available (whether as part of regular parish opportunities or special celebrations) to confirmation candidates, their sponsors and family members at various points throughout the process--especially in the period immediately leading up to the celebration of Confirmation (less than one month before the actual date is ideal)

Finally, in the weeks before the celebration of Confirmation, it is good to join together for a prayer “Vigil” that evokes the Easter Vigil, involving candidates, their families and the sponsors.

One of my great joys as bishop is to celebrate the dynamic sacrament of Confirmation with young people and their families. The Diocese of Des Moines places great trust and hope in you as you become the pivotal next generation to take up your call in Christ as servants, leaders, and lovers of God among us.

The Sacrament of Confirmation gives access to the mysterious love and life of Jesus and his Father through the gift of their Spirit—a pearl of great price we would be foolish to forsake. You are not fools, but wise in Christ. Come, Holy Spirit!

Faithfully in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "W. M. Joensen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Rev. William M. Joensen, Ph.D.  
Bishop of Des Moines