CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SALINA

RESTORED ORDER

A Parent's Guide

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Introduction

The Diocese of Salina has moved to the restored order of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation. That means children will ordinarily receive First Reconciliation in second grade, followed by Confirmation and First Eucharist in third grade.

For many parents, this will feel different. Most of us grew up thinking of Confirmation as a sacrament for teenagers. It is natural to have questions about why the Church is confirming children earlier, what a third grader can really understand, and what happens to religious education and youth ministry after Confirmation.

This guide is meant to answer those questions in plain language and help parents understand not only what is changing, but the vision behind the change.

The biggest thing to remember is this

We are not ending formation earlier. We are giving young people the grace of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation earlier and then spending the years that follow helping them, alongside their parents, grow into that grace and become disciples of Jesus Christ.

Part I — Five Things Every Parent Should Know

1. The sacraments are gifts of grace, not rewards to be earned.

Your child does not earn Confirmation by completing enough classes, service hours, retreats, or other requirements. The sacraments are gifts from God. Preparation still matters, but the purpose of preparation is to help a child understand the sacrament according to his or her age and receive it with faith and proper disposition (CIC can. 889 §2).

2. Confirmation is not graduation from religious education.

Confirmation and First Eucharist complete the sacramental process of Christian initiation, with the Eucharist as its culmination. This does not mean a child is finished learning the faith. Formation, conversion, moral growth, prayer, and discipleship continue for the rest of our lives.

3. What will your child keep learning about their Catholic faith?

They will keep learning about Scripture, prayer, the Mass, morality, Catholic doctrine, the saints, vocations, service, the virtues, and what it means to follow Jesus, all of which remain important. After third grade, the difference is that children are learning these things as fully initiated Catholics who have received Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.

4. Parents remain the primary educators of their children in the faith.

The parish and Catholic school are important partners, but they cannot replace the home. Children learn whether faith really matters by watching the people closest to them. Bringing them to Mass, praying with them, talking about faith, practicing forgiveness, serving others, and letting them see your own relationship with Jesus all matter deeply (CCC 1653, 2223; CIC can. 774 §2).

5. The goal is lifelong discipleship, not simply getting to a sacrament.

The goal of Catholic formation is not to keep a child enrolled until Confirmation. It is to help children and families know Jesus, live the Catholic faith, and become lifelong disciples. Restored order gives us an opportunity to focus the years after the sacraments more intentionally on that goal.

Part II — Understanding Restored Order

1. What is restored order?

Restored order means celebrating the Sacraments of Christian Initiation in their traditional theological sequence—Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist (CCC 1211, 1233). In the Diocese of Salina, First Reconciliation will ordinarily take place in second grade, followed by Confirmation and First Eucharist in third grade (Diocese of Salina, Sacramental Preparation Guidelines).

Baptism gives us new life in Christ. Confirmation deepens baptismal grace, gives a special strength of the Holy Spirit, unites us more firmly to Christ and His Church, and equips us for Christian witness. The Eucharist nourishes us with Christ Himself and completes Christian initiation (CCC 1212, 1285, 1302–1305, 1322).

2. Why did the Diocese make this change?

We want to give our young people the graces they need as soon as they reach the age of reason. We would never send a player into a game without giving them the equipment and preparation they need. In the same way, we should not unnecessarily delay the sacramental grace God gives His children for the challenges they will face.

Through Confirmation, the Holy Spirit strengthens them, deepens the grace of Baptism, and gives them His gifts for the lifelong work of holiness and discipleship (CCC 1302–1305). We want our young people to have those graces, and then have time to grow in them, develop them, and be formed by them before they enter the more difficult years of adolescence. In our culture, many of those pressures, temptations, and difficult choices are coming at an ever earlier age.

This is at the heart of restored order. Grace is not a reward we receive after reaching a certain age or level of spiritual maturity. Grace is what helps us grow in spiritual maturity. Rather than waiting until young people are already facing those challenges to give them the grace of Confirmation, we want them to receive that grace earlier and have years to learn how to live it.

3. Why Confirmation before First Eucharist?

Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist belong together as the Sacraments of Christian Initiation. Confirmation strengthens the baptized through a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the Eucharist is the culmination of Christian initiation as we receive Christ Himself. This is also the order normally used when adults are initiated into the Church (CCC 1211, 1212, 1233, 1322; CIC can. 866).

4. Are third graders really old enough to be confirmed?

Yes. A child does not need an adult understanding of Confirmation to receive its grace. Children need appropriate preparation according to their age and ability. The Church even provides for children who have not reached the age of reason to receive Confirmation in danger of death so they are not deprived of the sacrament's grace (CCC 1307; CIC can. 891).

We already understand this with First Eucharist. A seven- or eight-year-old does not possess an adult theological understanding of the Real Presence. The Church asks that children understand the mystery of Christ according to their capacity and are able to receive the Body of Christ with faith and devotion (CIC can. 913 §1). The same principle applies to age-appropriate preparation for Confirmation.

5. Isn't Confirmation when my child chooses the Catholic faith for himself or herself?

Sometimes we hear Confirmation described as the time when a young person chooses the Catholic faith for themselves or confirms the promises their parents made for them at Baptism. While we certainly want every young person to make the faith their own and freely choose to follow Christ, that is not what the Sacrament of Confirmation is.

At Baptism, God truly acts. The grace a child receives at Baptism does not need to be approved or ratified later in life to become effective. The Catechism specifically warns us not to confuse Christian maturity with physical age (CCC 1308).

Confirmation is first about what God does for us, not what we do for God. It builds upon and perfects baptismal grace. Through Confirmation, the Holy Spirit strengthens the baptized, increases His gifts, unites us more firmly to Christ and His Church, and gives us strength to witness to the faith (CCC 1302–1305).

Candidates may renew their baptismal promises and personally profess the faith before Confirmation (CIC can. 889 §2). This is a meaningful expression of faith and preparation, but it is not a ratification that makes Baptism effective, nor is it the purpose of Confirmation.

Of course, as children grow, we want them to make the faith their own and freely respond to Christ. Choosing Christ is the lifelong response to the grace we receive in the sacraments. It is not the essence of Confirmation, which is first God's gift and action in us. Through that gift, we are strengthened to live faithfully and bear witness to Christ throughout our lives.

6. Haven't Catholics always confirmed teenagers?

No. In the first centuries of the Church, Baptism and Confirmation generally formed one celebration, and Christian initiation culminated in the Eucharist. Over time, especially in the Western Church, the sacraments became separated for historical and pastoral reasons (CCC 1290–1292).

In 1910, Quam Singulari reaffirmed that children who had reached the age of reason could and should be admitted to First Eucharist without requiring advanced theological knowledge or maturity. As First Eucharist moved to an earlier age, it came to precede Confirmation in many places. That sequence became so familiar that many Catholics naturally assumed it was the traditional order (*Quam Singulari*, 1–3).

Restoring the order does not create a new understanding of Confirmation. It restores the traditional theological relationship among the Sacraments of Christian Initiation: we are born in Baptism, strengthened by the Holy Spirit in Confirmation, and nourished by Christ in the Eucharist.

Part III — What Does This Mean for My Child?

1. What will my third grader need to know?

Children should receive sacramental preparation appropriate to their age.

They should understand the basic meaning of Confirmation and Eucharist, recognize the Holy Spirit and His gifts, understand that the Eucharist is truly the Body and Blood of Christ, participate reverently in Mass, know how to receive Holy Communion, and understand and be able to renew their baptismal promises according to their age and capacity.

The Diocese's Updated Sacramental Preparation Guidelines provide the specific catechetical objectives and expectations for preparation. Deeper understanding does not disappear. It continues throughout the years that follow.

2. What if my child does not understand everything about Confirmation?

No child, teenager, or adult completely understands the mystery of a sacrament. The Church asks for suitable, age-appropriate preparation. For those who have the use of reason, candidates must be properly disposed, in a state of grace, and able to renew their baptismal promises (CIC can. 889 §2; CCC 1310).

Understanding grows throughout a lifetime as we continue to learn, pray, receive the sacraments, and live the graces God has given us.

3. Will my child still have a Confirmation saint and learn about the Holy Spirit?

Your parish will provide the specific details of its sacramental preparation, but learning about the Holy Spirit, His gifts, the meaning of Confirmation, the communion of saints, prayer, and Christian discipleship remain important parts of Catholic formation. The change in age does not make those things less important. They are simply taught in a way appropriate to younger children.

4. Will Confirmation and First Eucharist be celebrated together?

Yes, both of those will take place in the same Mass. The restored order places Confirmation before Eucharist so that Eucharist remains the culmination of Christian initiation. Your parish will provide the specific liturgical and scheduling details for your child's celebration.

5. What if my child has special needs or learns differently?

The Church prepares children according to their capacity. Parents should talk with their pastor, DRE, Catholic school, or catechist about any accommodations or individualized preparation that may help their child understand and receive the sacraments reverently. The goal is not to create unnecessary barriers, but to provide suitable preparation for each child.

Part IV — Parents & the Domestic Church

1. What is my role as a parent?

The Church calls parents the primary educators of their children in the faith (CCC 1653, 2223; CIC can. 774 §2). That does not mean parents have to become professional theologians or replace the parish catechist. It means faith begins and is reinforced at home.

Before children ever meet a catechist, they are learning prayer, forgiveness, love, trust, priorities, and whether faith really matters by watching their parents. The parish and Catholic school support your vocation. They do not replace it.

2. What can I actually do at home?

Start with simple, consistent things. Bring your family to Sunday Mass. Pray together. Pray before meals and at bedtime. Read a short passage of Scripture. Talk about what you heard at Mass. Ask your child what he or she is learning. Go to Confession as a family. Spend time in Eucharistic Adoration. Celebrate saints and feast days. Serve someone together. Let your children hear you talk naturally about God and see you turn to Him when life is difficult.

None of these things has to be complicated. Children need to see that Catholic faith is not simply something they do in a classroom. It is part of the way your family lives.

3. What if I don't feel equipped to teach the faith?

You are not alone. Many parents care deeply about their children's faith but do not feel confident answering every question. You do not have to know everything. Be willing to learn alongside your child, ask questions, use the resources your parish provides, and let your pastor, DRE, catechists, and Catholic school help you.

The goal is not to place more pressure on parents. It is to help parents become increasingly confident living and sharing the Catholic faith in their homes. The parish should support and strengthen the Domestic Church in forming the next generation of disciples (CIC can. 776).

4. What matters most?

Your example. Young people need to see that the Catholic faith matters in your life, not just in the classroom or at church. No parent lives the faith perfectly. What matters is that your children see you praying, going to Mass, seeking forgiveness, returning to Confession, serving others, asking questions, and continuing to grow in your own relationship with Jesus (CCC 2223).

Part V — What Happens After the Sacraments?

1. Does religious education end after third grade?

Absolutely not. Young people continue formation through Catholic school religion classes, parish religious education, CYO, youth ministry, retreats, service, Adoration, and other opportunities. Canon Law directs pastors to ensure that children receive fuller and deeper catechetical formation after First Eucharist (CIC can. 777, 3°).

2. If my child is already confirmed, what are they supposed to be learning?

They are learning to become disciples of Jesus Christ. After initiation, formation becomes increasingly mystagogical. Mystagogy means entering more deeply into the sacramental mysteries we have received, reflecting on their meaning, growing in their graces, and allowing the Holy Spirit to shape how we live.

Instead of spending time preparing for a sacrament they will receive someday, young people can spend those years learning to understand and live the grace they have already received.

3. What should grades 4–8 look like?

For many children, religious education may look much like what it does now. They will continue learning Scripture, prayer, morality, the sacraments, the virtues, the saints, the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit, and the Church's teachings. The difference is the context. They are now fully initiated Catholics learning how to live the sacraments they have received.

4. What should high school formation look like?

High school is an opportunity to go deeper, not to stop catechesis. Teenagers are ready to wrestle with difficult questions about morality, sexuality and chastity, conscience, virtue and sin, relationships, vocations, human dignity, social justice, Scripture, prayer, and Church teaching.

They also need faithful Catholic adults who know them, listen to them, answer their questions, challenge them, pray with them, and walk with them. Small groups, CYO, retreats, Prayer & Action, Adoration, service, Bible studies, leadership, and other youth ministry opportunities can help young people move from simply knowing about the faith to living as disciples.

5. But won't children stop coming after they are confirmed?

Some may, but that already happens under our current model. Moving Confirmation later has never guaranteed that a teenager will become a lifelong disciple. Some young people stop participating before Confirmation. Others remain until Confirmation and then leave afterward.

Confirmation does not end a parent's responsibility for their child's faith formation. Parents remain their children's primary educators and catechists. Receiving Confirmation is not the time to stop religious education, but to continue helping children grow in the grace they have received.

That formation also continues in the Domestic Church at home by going to Mass together, praying together, reading Scripture, receiving the sacraments, talking about the faith, and serving others.

If a child stops participating simply because they have received Confirmation, the problem is not that the sacrament was celebrated too early, but that we didn't help parents understand that discipleship and formation are lifelong.

6. So should I keep sending my child after Confirmation?

Yes. Confirmation is not the end of faith formation. As children grow, they face new questions, challenges, and decisions, and continued religious education helps them grow in the grace they have received and learn to live their faith.

Part VI — Questions Parents Commonly Ask

1. Is the Diocese lowering the expectations for Confirmation?

No. The expectations are being made age-appropriate. A third grader should not be expected to demonstrate the theological understanding of an eighth grader, just as an eighth grader is not expected to demonstrate the understanding of an adult theologian. The Church asks children to understand according to their capacity and to receive suitable preparation as Canon Law and the Catechism require.

2. Is my child missing out by being confirmed younger?

No. In fact, they are gaining something. Your child receives the grace of Confirmation earlier and has the years that follow to grow in that grace. They will enter adolescence strengthened by sacramental graces that previous generations often did not receive until later, helping them grow in faith, face new challenges, and more fully live as disciples of Jesus. The goal is not to remove formation from adolescence, but to let that formation build upon the grace of Confirmation rather than using Confirmation as the finish line.

3. What happens to the idea of choosing the faith?

We absolutely want young people to choose Christ and embrace the Catholic faith as their own. But that choice is a lifelong response to grace, not the definition of the Sacrament of Confirmation. Parents, parishes, schools, and youth ministry should continue helping young people ask questions, deepen their relationship with Jesus, and freely live the faith as they mature.

4. What if I still have concerns about restored order?

Please ask questions. Talk with your pastor, DRE, Catholic school, or the Diocese. This is a significant change in pastoral practice, and it is understandable that parents may need time to learn, pray, and understand the reasons behind it. We have several resources available at the end of this packet to help.

5. What should I be doing right now?

Stay connected with your parish and pay attention to the sacramental preparation information it provides. Continue bringing your family to Mass and religious education. Most importantly, pray with and for your children. Help them see the sacraments not as requirements to complete, but as encounters with Jesus and gifts of grace that are meant to shape their entire lives.

6. What if we are moving in from a diocese that does not use restored order?

That's okay. If your child has already received First Eucharist but has not yet been confirmed, talk with your pastor or parish catechetical leader. Your child will receive age-appropriate preparation for Confirmation based on where they are in their faith formation and be confirmed when they are ready.

Part VII — Resources for Parents

Start Here — Bishop Vincke's Letter

Bishop Vincke explains his discernment and why he believes restored order will benefit our young people.

https://salinadiocese.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Bishop-Restored-Order-9-23-25-PDF.pdf

Why I've Come to Love the Restored Order — Deacon Bill Meagher

This article is particularly helpful for parents concerned that children will stop participating after Confirmation and explains why the sacraments should not be used as leverage to keep young people enrolled.

https://salinadiocese.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Meagher-August-2025-article-PDF.pdf

Restored Order Frequently Asked Questions

This resource addresses many common theological and practical questions about Confirmation and restored order.

https://salinadiocese.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Restored_Order_FAQ_NoTimeline.pdf

Updated Sacramental Preparation Guidelines

These guidelines spell out the catechetical expectations and help distinguish what the Church actually requires from things that may have become local customs associated with Confirmation.

https://salinadiocese.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Salina-Diocese-Sacramental-Guidelines-Updated-2025-4-8-26.pdf

History of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation

This timeline explains how the early Church celebrated the Sacraments of Christian Initiation and how their order and timing developed over the centuries.

https://salinadiocese.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/The-early-church-3.pdf

From Baptism to Missionary Disciple

This resource explains the larger vision of religious education and youth ministry as one continuous journey of belonging, receiving, mystagogy, discipleship, and mission.

https://salinadiocese.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Baptism-to-Missionary-Disciple.pdf