

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SALINA



RESTORED ORDER

A Pastor's and DRE Guide

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Part 1—Five Things We Want Everyone to Know	4
Part 2 — Understanding Restored Order	5
Part III — What Do We Teach Now That We Are In Restored Order	8
Part IV — Parents & the Domestic Church	10
Part V — Curriculum & Sacramental Preparation	12
Part VI — Helping Parishioners Understand	14

Introduction

The transition to the restored order of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation will naturally bring questions from parents, catechists, teachers, and parishioners.

This guide is intended to give pastors simple answers to many of those questions and, more importantly, a clear understanding of the vision behind the transition.

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.

The restoration of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation gives us an opportunity not simply to change when young people receive the sacraments, but to renew our understanding of formation as a lifelong journey of discipleship.

The Vision in Two Sentences

We aren't 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 1—Five Things We Want Everyone to Know

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

Bishop Vincke has emphasized this from the beginning. We do not earn the sacraments by completing enough classes, service hours, retreats, or other requirements. The sacraments are gifts of grace, not prizes earned by academic or behavioral performance. That does not make preparation unimportant. Candidates must still receive suitable catechesis and, when they have the use of reason, be properly disposed and able to renew their baptismal promises (CIC can. 889 §2).

2. You do not need to change everything you are teaching.

This is important—Continue teaching Scripture, prayer, morality, the Mass, Catholic doctrine, the saints, vocations, service, and what it means to follow Jesus.

After third grade, we teach those things to fully initiated Catholics and help them recognize, understand, and live the sacramental graces they have already received. Here, fully initiated means they have received Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. It does not mean their formation, conversion, moral growth, or discipleship is complete. Young people continue religious education, CYO, and youth ministry after receiving Confirmation and First Eucharist.

3. Formation does not end with Confirmation and First Eucharist.

Confirmation and First Eucharist are not graduations. Confirmation and First Eucharist complete the sacramental process of Christian initiation, whose culmination is the Eucharist. They also mark the beginning of a new stage of lifelong growth as fully initiated Catholics.

The years following initiation become increasingly mystagogical—helping young people unpack the sacraments they have received, grow in their graces, and allow the Holy Spirit to form them through those graces as they learn more about their faith.

4. Parents are the primary teachers of their children in the faith.

The parish has an incredibly important role, but it cannot replace the home.

Parents teach their children what faith looks like by bringing them to Mass, praying with them, talking about faith and morality, reading Scripture, practicing forgiveness, serving others, and showing by their own lives that a relationship with Jesus matters.

A parish's job is to support, equip, and accompany parents in that responsibility.

5. As young people grow older, formation should become increasingly relational.

Especially in junior high and high school, young people need faithful adults who know them, listen to them, pray with them, answer their questions, challenge them, and walk with them.

Catechesis remains important, but it should increasingly be accompanied by relational ministry, small groups, prayer, service, leadership, and discipleship.

Part 2 — Understanding Restored Order

1. What is restored order?

Restored order means celebrating the Sacraments of Christian Initiation in the traditional theological sequence—Baptism → Confirmation → Eucharist. This sequence expresses the unity of Christian initiation while respecting legitimate variations in pastoral discipline and liturgical tradition (CCC 1211, 1233).

According to the Diocese of Salina's current pastoral practice, First Reconciliation will ordinarily take place in second grade, followed by Confirmation and First Eucharist in third grade.

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 are we doing this?

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 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). Receiving that grace earlier gives young people time to grow in it and be formed by it before the more difficult years of adolescence, when pressures, temptations, and difficult choices are increasingly coming at an earlier age.

This is at the heart of restored order. Grace is not a reward for spiritual maturity. Grace is what helps us grow in spiritual maturity. We want young people to receive that grace earlier and have years to learn how to live it.

3. Why Confirmation before First Eucharist?

Because Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist belong together as the Sacraments of Christian Initiation, with the Eucharist as their culmination.

Confirmation deepens baptismal grace through a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit, strengthens our bond with Christ and His Church, and equips us for witness. The Eucharist is the center and culmination of Christian initiation as the newly initiated receive Christ Himself.

This reflects the ancient theological sequence of Christian initiation and is still the order we use when adults are initiated into the Church. At the same time, the Church recognizes legitimate variations in pastoral discipline and liturgical tradition. In every form, the Eucharist remains the culmination toward which Christian initiation is ordered (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 provides for children who have not yet reached the age of reason to receive Confirmation in danger of death, so that they are not deprived of the sacrament's grace (CCC 1307; CIC can. 891).

We already understand this principle with First Eucharist. The Real Presence of Jesus Christ—truly present in His Body and Blood—is one of the most profound mysteries of our faith. Yet the Church does not require a seven- or eight-year-old to possess an adult theological understanding before receiving Jesus. Canon Law requires sufficient knowledge and careful preparation so 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).

If we trust children at this age to understand the Eucharist according to their capacity and receive Jesus with faith and devotion, we can also trust them to understand Confirmation according to their capacity—that in Confirmation the Holy Spirit strengthens the grace they received at Baptism, gives them His gifts, and strengthens them to follow Jesus and live as His disciples.

A third grader will not fully understand Confirmation. Neither does a second grader fully understand the Eucharist. Adult-level theological comprehension is not required. Those who possess the use of reason must nevertheless receive age-appropriate instruction, be in the state of grace, be properly disposed, and be capable of renewing their baptismal promises (CIC can. 889 §2; CCC 1310). The Church also teaches that the fruitfulness of a sacrament depends in part on the disposition of the one who receives it (CCC 1128). Deeper understanding comes throughout a lifetime as we continue to learn, pray, and live the graces we have received.

5. Isn't Confirmation supposed to be when someone chooses the Catholic faith for themselves?

No. That understanding has become associated with Confirmation over time, but it is not how the Church defines the sacrament. Neither the Catechism nor Canon Law describes Confirmation as the moment when a young person chooses to become Catholic or decides for themselves that they want to remain in the Church. In fact, the Catechism specifically warns us not to confuse Christian maturity with physical age and reminds us that the grace received at Baptism does not need to be “ratified” later in life to become effective (CCC 1308).

Confirmation is first about what God does, not about reaching an age when we can prove what we will do. This does not exclude the recipient's necessary response of faith and openness to grace.

Through Confirmation, the Holy Spirit strengthens the baptized, deepens baptismal grace, unites us more firmly to Christ and His Church, increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and gives us strength to witness to the faith (CCC 1302–1305).

Of course, as children mature, we want them to make the faith their own, freely choose Christ, and live as His disciples. That lifelong response to God's grace should not be confused with the purpose of the Sacrament of Confirmation itself.

6. Haven't we 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, particularly in the Western Church, the sacraments became separated for various historical and pastoral reasons (CCC 1290–1292).

One of the biggest changes came in 1910, when *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. At the time, First Eucharist was often delayed until age 12, 14, or even later. The decree also rejected the idea that the Eucharist is a reward for virtue rather than a remedy for human weakness (Sacred Congregation of the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Quam Singulari*, 1910).

That was an important and beautiful reform. As First Eucharist moved to an earlier age, First Eucharist came to precede Confirmation in many places. Over time, that sequence became so familiar that many Catholics naturally assumed it was the traditional order of the sacraments.

The Church's essential understanding of Christian initiation remained continuous, even though its theological explanations, liturgical practice, canonical discipline, and pastoral arrangements developed over time. The Catechism still describes the order as Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist—through Baptism we are born anew, through Confirmation we are strengthened, and through the Eucharist we are nourished with the food of eternal life (CCC 1212).

We see that sequence clearly in adult initiation today. Canon Law identifies Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist as the three sacraments belonging to Christian initiation and necessary for its fullness. When adults enter the Church, they ordinarily receive Baptism, then Confirmation, and then Eucharist at the same celebration. Even the Catechism's explanation of the Roman Rite of infant Baptism describes Baptism as being completed later by Confirmation and Eucharist, with the Eucharist as the summit of Christian initiation (CIC can. 842 §2; can. 866; CCC 1233).

So, restored order is not creating a new understanding of Confirmation. It is restoring the traditional theological relationship among the Sacraments of Christian Initiation—we are born in Baptism, strengthened by the Holy Spirit in Confirmation, and then nourished by Christ in the Eucharist.

Part III — What Do We Teach Now That We Are Restored Order?

1. Do we need to completely change what we teach after third grade?

No. This may be the most important practical thing for pastors and catechists to understand. Keep teaching the faith. Teach Scripture. Teach prayer. Teach the Mass. Teach morality. Teach the Creed. Teach the commandments and Beatitudes. Teach the saints. Teach vocations. Teach service. Teach the virtues. Teach what it means to follow Jesus.

The difference is that the young people sitting in front of us have now received all three Sacraments of Christian Initiation. Instead of preparing them for a future sacrament, we can help them understand and live the grace they have already received.

2. So religious education continues after third grade?

Absolutely. Young people continue religious education through Catholic school religion classes, Parish Religious Education, CYO, youth ministry, retreats, service, Adoration, and other formation opportunities. Canon Law likewise directs pastors to ensure that children receive fuller and deeper catechetical formation after First Eucharist (CIC can. 777, 3°).

The diocesan formation vision describes grades 4 and beyond as a time of mystagogy. Mystagogy is more than simply continuing classes, service projects, or youth activities. Those can support it, but its heart is helping young people reflect more deeply on the sacramental mysteries they have received and learn how those graces shape their prayer, choices, relationships, and life as disciples.

3. What is mystagogy?

Mystagogy is the ongoing process of 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. Religious education, prayer, service, and youth ministry can all support mystagogy, but they become truly mystagogical when they help young people connect what they are learning and doing to the grace of the sacraments they have received.

We already see this clearly in OCIA. The Easter Vigil is not graduation. Newly initiated Catholics continue in mystagogy after receiving the sacraments.

The same is true of Marriage and Holy Orders. A married couple spends a lifetime growing into the grace received on their wedding day. A priest or deacon spends a lifetime allowing the grace of Holy Orders to continue forming him.

Confirmation and Eucharist should be no different.

4. What should grades 4–8 look like?

For many parishes, they may look very similar, if not exactly the same, as they do now.

Nothing needs to change simply because Confirmation has moved. If you have a good religious education program, keep using it. Continue teaching Scripture, prayer, morality, the sacraments, the virtues, the saints, the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit, and the teachings of the Church. Continue good age-appropriate catechesis and teach the faith well.

The difference is not what we teach, but who we are teaching. After third grade, we are teaching young people who are fully initiated Catholics. Rather than preparing them for a sacrament they will receive someday, we are helping them better understand the sacraments they have already received, grow in those graces, and learn to live them as disciples of Jesus Christ. The curriculum may not need to be replaced, but parishes should review its sequence, sacramental objectives, and mystagogical emphasis.

5. What should high school formation look like?

Keep teaching the faith. Confirmation moving to third grade does not mean we stop catechesis in high school or water down what we teach. In fact, these years give us an opportunity to go deeper.

High school students are ready to wrestle with some of the more difficult questions of our faith and how it applies to their lives. We should not be afraid to teach Catholic morality, sexuality and chastity, conscience, virtue and sin, relationships, vocations, human dignity, social justice, Scripture, prayer, and the teachings of the Church. Young people deserve to know what the Church teaches, why she teaches it, and how to live it in the real world. The U.S. bishops specifically include these areas in their framework for adolescent catechesis. (USCCB, *Renewing the Vision: The Ministry of Catechesis*).

What should increasingly change is how we accompany them as we teach it. High school students need faithful Catholic adults who know them, listen to their questions, challenge them, pray with them, and walk with them. Small groups and relational ministry create places where young people can ask honest questions, talk through difficult issues, study Scripture, pray together, serve, discern their vocation, and learn to live their faith.

The goal is not to choose between catechesis and relationship. We need both. We want young people who know the Catholic faith, understand why it matters, have adults walking alongside them, and are learning to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. That combination of catechesis, community, prayer, service, and accompaniment is also consistent with the Church's broader vision for youth ministry.

6. Does restored order mean youth ministry becomes less important?

No. If anything, it becomes more important. Youth ministry no longer needs to function primarily as a way to get teenagers through sacramental preparation.

CYO, retreats, Prayer & Action, Adoration, service, Bible studies, small groups, and other youth ministry opportunities can focus even more intentionally on relationship with Jesus, belonging, discipleship, leadership, vocation, and mission.

Part IV — Parents & the Domestic Church

1. Who is primarily responsible for forming children in the faith?

Parents. The Church calls parents the primary educators of their children in the faith (CCC 1653, 2223; CIC can. 774 §2).

Before children ever meet a catechist, they are already learning from their parents. They learn prayer, forgiveness, love, trust, priorities, and whether faith really matters by watching life at home.

The parish and Catholic school are essential partners, but they support, not replace, parents' vocation.

2. What if parents don't feel equipped to teach the faith?

This is a very real concern for many parents. They may understand that they are their children's primary educators in the faith but still feel they don't know enough about the Catholic faith to answer questions or help their children grow.

This is where accompaniment becomes so important. If we ask parents to take an active role in their children's faith formation, we also need to help form the parents. That means providing opportunities for adult catechesis, helping parents grow in their own understanding of Scripture and Church teaching, giving them practical resources for the home, and creating opportunities for families to pray and encounter Jesus together. (CIC can. 776).

This is also a tremendous opportunity. We have parents who may not currently participate in adult faith formation but care deeply about their children's faith. Sacramental preparation and religious education give us a natural opportunity to invite those parents to grow alongside their children.

The goal is not simply to place more responsibility on parents. It is to accompany and form them so they feel 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.

3. What if parents ask, "Why should I make my child keep going after Confirmation?"

Because 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.

We should encourage and help parents to continue forming their children in the faith by bringing them to Mass, religious education, and youth ministry. We should also help them make prayer part of family life, read and talk about Scripture, have conversations about faith and morality, and give their children opportunities to encounter Jesus.

Most importantly, we should help parents understand the importance of modeling the faith themselves. Young people need to see that the Catholic faith matters in their parents' lives, not just in the classroom or at church. (CCC 2223).

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

Some may—but that is already happening under our current model.

Moving Confirmation later has never guaranteed that a teenager will become a lifelong disciple. Some young people today receive First Eucharist but stop participating before Confirmation. As a result, they never complete the Sacraments of Christian Initiation or receive the graces of Confirmation.

We also have to recognize that using Confirmation as an incentive to keep young people enrolled in religious education has not necessarily been successful in forming lifelong disciples. In many cases, it may have kept a young person in the program for a few additional years, but too often they still simply leave after receiving Confirmation. We have delayed the point at which they leave without necessarily changing the outcome.

Keeping a young person enrolled until a sacrament is not the same thing as helping them develop a relationship with Jesus and a desire to live their Catholic faith.

The deeper question is not simply, “How do we keep them enrolled until Confirmation?” It is, “How do we help families and young people become lifelong disciples of Jesus?”

5. What if a family moves into the Diocese from a diocese that does not use restored order?

If a child has already received First Eucharist but has not yet been confirmed, work with the family to provide age-appropriate preparation for Confirmation based on where the child is in his or her faith formation. The child can then be confirmed when ready.

Part V — Curriculum & Sacramental Preparation

1. Do we need to change our religious education curriculum?

Not necessarily. If your parish has a good curriculum that is serving your young people well, restored order does not automatically require you to replace it.

The Diocese recommends five programs that we believe provide strong ongoing catechesis. Pastors may also choose another program that appears on the current USCCB Conformity Review List. <https://www.usccb.org/resources/Current%20Conformity%20List.pdf>

Our Top Five Recommended List

Word of Life — Augustine Institute / Ignatius Press

<https://www.augustineinstitute.org/program-and-resources/word-of-life>

K–8. Strong emphasis on evangelization and the kerygma, with attention to both what the Church teaches and why the faith matters. It also provides an online portal that can be used to engage parents.

Spirit of Truth — Sophia Institute for Teachers

<https://sophiateachers.org/support/spirit-of-truth-parish-edition/>

K–8. Strong Catholic content incorporating Scripture, sacred art, the liturgical year, and resources for catechists.

Alive in Christ — Our Sunday Visitor

<https://aliveinchrist.osv.com/>

Grades 1–8. Offers flexibility for traditional classroom, family-based, home-based, bilingual, summer, and other parish models.

Pflaum Gospel Weeklies

<https://www.gospelweeklies.com/>

Preschool through Grade 9. Built around the Sunday Gospel and liturgical year, making it especially useful for parishes wanting a strong connection between religious education, Sunday Mass, and family formation.

Faith and Life — Ignatius Press

<https://loc.ignatius.com/faithandlife/index.html>

Grades 1–8. A traditional and systematic approach built around salvation history and Catholic doctrine, including a parish catechist edition designed for weekly religious education.

2. What resources do we recommend specifically for restored-order sacramental preparation?

The Diocese currently recommends three options, but there are others out there, or you can use something you create on your own.

Word of Life — *You Are Sent*

Augustine Institute — <https://www.augustineinstitute.org/program-and-resources/you-are-sent>

Sophia Institute — *Sealed in Fire*

Restored-order preparation materials —

<https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/68627226/sealed-in-fire-restored-order-teacher-guide-2-lessons-sample>

Loyola Press — *Rejoice*

Loyola's sacramental preparation series includes a restored-order option—

<https://rejoice.loyolapress.com/product-samples/>

These resources are intended specifically to help prepare younger children appropriately for Confirmation and Eucharist.

3. What exactly does a third grader need to know?

We are not trying to squeeze an eighth-grade Confirmation curriculum into third grade. 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 updated Sacramental Preparation Guidelines provide the specific catechetical objectives and expectations for preparation. The deeper formation doesn't disappear—it continues in the years that follow.

Part VI — Helping Parishioners Understand

1. Someone in my parish is struggling with restored order. Where should I start?

We have several resources available. Rather than trying to answer every concern immediately, it can be helpful to ask someone to read a few things first.

Start with these three resources:

A. Bishop Vincke's Letter

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

This should be the starting point. Bishop explains his discernment and why he believes the restored order will benefit our young people.

B. Deacon Meagher's Letter — "Why I've Come to Love the Restored Order"

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

This is particularly helpful for someone concerned that children will stop participating after Confirmation. It addresses the concern directly and explains why sacraments shouldn't be used as leverage to keep young people enrolled.

C. Our Frequently Asked Questions Article

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

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

Often, those three resources help people understand the change differently before a longer conversation even begins.

2. What if their question is about what children actually need to know?

Give them the Updated Sacramental Preparation Guidelines.

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

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

3. What if their concern is history?

Give them the History of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation timeline.

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

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

4. What if their biggest concern is what happens after third grade?

Give them *From Baptism to Missionary Disciple: Forming Missionary Disciples Through the Domestic Church*.

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

This is the larger vision of religious education and youth ministry. It shows formation as one continuous journey—Belong → Receive → Mystagogy → Discipleship & Mission

The goal isn't to get children to a sacrament. The goal is to help children and families become lifelong disciples of Jesus Christ.