



DIOCESE *of* LACROSSE

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

22 August 2014
Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Dear Parents,

May the Lord give you peace.

I am taking this opportunity to thank you for your faithfulness in bringing your son or daughter to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. The Virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity that are *strengthened* in Confirmation by the spiritual power and grace of the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit are crucial for our young people. In this way the Church invites and empowers them to discover their God-given purpose in life, to protect their dignity, and to be faithful in following Jesus Christ.

I have instructed that young people in our Diocese receive this Sacrament when they are between the ages of fifteen and sixteen years, a more mature age, so that they may more fully understand the grace of Confirmation to intensify their Baptismal commitment as disciples of Jesus Christ. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraph 1319, a candidate for Confirmation must "be prepared to assume the role of disciple and witness to Christ." Paragraph 1303 teaches that Confirmation "gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly, and never to be ashamed of the Cross." My expectation is for those who seek Confirmation to recognize and accept the seriousness of this call and its impact for their lives.

I also take this opportunity to help you in your parental obligation to show why it is essential that your sons and daughters continue to receive ongoing formation **after** the reception of the Sacrament. Confirmation is a beginning, not an end. As primary educators of your children, I invite you to continue their spiritual and human formation in partnership with your pastor and the local parish community and to make sure that your teens receive valuable and ongoing faith formation. Advanced Bible studies and faith formation will stimulate intellectual curiosity about their Faith. Further, opportunities to form relationships with like-minded Catholic peers and the ongoing development of the habit of daily prayer will enable your children to make good decisions while recognizing the consequences of their choices. They will be empowered to take advantage of opportunities in apologetics so that they can defend what they believe while having the confidence to inspire in others the faith that comes with discipleship. All of this, of course, assists them in attaining the full measure of maturity in our beloved Faith

It is, of course, essential that your children attend Sunday Mass. It would be even better if you did so often as a family. We need to receive Jesus Christ in Holy Communion so that He can strengthen us to be faithful to Him and to live according to our high calling as children of God, even in the midst of difficulties. Receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation frequently also sustains our capacity to live the Christian life and understand our moral obligations before God and our neighbors. Prayers before meals and other Christian customs help to keep the faith alive. If our faith is not active and growing, it begins to wither and die. Your "faith modeling" in all these areas is really welcome by your children—even though they may not always say so. As they grow into responsible Christian adulthood, you will know how important your efforts with ongoing formation have been.

Let us be faithful in our responsibility to provide the next generation with proper formation. The peace and joy they will experience as they continue to develop an understanding of their personal dignity and eternal destiny will allow them to be a true Christian leaven in society. Please strongly encourage their continued growth by taking advantage of ongoing training in the Faith and reception of the Sacraments. Thank you for your kind attention and for your responsible leadership as parents of the next faithful generation. God be with you.

With personal good wishes and prayers, I am

Very truly yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "William Patrick Callahan". The signature is written in black ink and is preceded by a small cross symbol.

Most Reverend William Patrick Callahan
Bishop of La Crosse

WPC:db