



Saint Mary Roman Catholic Church

40 Spring Mount Road, Schwenksville, PA 19473

Office of the Pastor

Rev. Louis P. Bellopede, Pastor

February 12, 2018

Dear Parents,

Greetings in the Lord!

In baptism, your child was claimed by our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, became a child of God and a member of the Catholic Church. As they grew, they learned of the love of God in the "first school of faith, the family." The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states: "The Christian home is the place where children receive the first proclamation of the faith. For this reason the family home is rightly called 'the domestic church', a community of grace and prayer, a school of human virtues and of Christian charity". (No. 1666)

When your child became of school age however, the Church provided religious instruction through the parish religious education program or Catholic school. This formation in faith includes sacramental preparation for First Penance, First Holy Communion and Confirmation. The primary object of this catechesis is to put your child into an intimate communion with Jesus Christ by knowing, loving, and serving Him in this world to be happy with Him for all eternity. This education, in conjunction with the domestic church, is more than simply learning about Jesus; it is a spiritual formation which challenges your child to become a model of the faith, and a disciple of Christ for their lifetime. The Sacrament of Confirmation gives grace for the spiritual journey.

Over the past two years, the Archdiocese conducted a study regarding the grades for Confirmation. Overwhelmingly, bishops, pastors, principals and directors of religious education noted there is a much better understanding of the Sacrament of Confirmation by older grade school students.

On June 29, 2017, after a presentation of the results of this study, the Council of Priests voted almost unanimously for the standard grade for the Sacrament of Confirmation to be grades 7 and/or 8 in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Over the summer, a consultation with the priests of the Archdiocese was conducted. This consultation supported the June 29th decision, and on September 21, 2017 the Council of Priests again voted in favor of this change from the practice of Confirmation in grades 4, 5 or 6. On January 18, 2018, the Archbishop determined, with the Council of Priests, that the new grades for the Sacrament of Confirmation are 7th and/or 8th grade.

Therefore, beginning in the 2018-2019 school year, only those parishes, which presently confirm in Grades 7 and/or 8, will celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation. Parishes which presently confirm in Grades 4, 5, or 6 will adjust their schedule according to the time table on the reverse side of this letter.

As pastor, it is my desire for your child to be spiritually equipped to face the challenges of this world and bear witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I am confident that this change, with your familial support, will allow for a deeper apprenticeship in the faith and stronger relationship with God for your child.

Love and prayers,

Reverend Louis P. Bellopede
Pastor

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