



VICAR GENERAL
MODERATOR OF THE CURIA

ARCHDIOCESE OF BOSTON
66 BROOKS DRIVE
BRAintree, MASSACHUSETTS 02184-3839

April 11, 2024

Your Excellency/Monsignor/Father:

Peace be with you.

On behalf of His Eminence, Seán P. Cardinal O'Malley, O.F.M. Cap., Archbishop of Boston, please allow me this opportunity to introduce to you a decree changing the age for the Sacrament of Confirmation. As the decree itself notes, this comes only after years of investigation and consultation. We pray that this change will bear much fruit and assist young Catholics and their families along the path of discipleship.

With best wishes and an assurance of prayers, I am

Fraternally yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Mark O'Connell, J.C.D.
Auxiliary Bishop of Boston
Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia

DECREE OF PROMULGATION

In Nomine Domini

In 1989, following upon the Archdiocesan Synod, His Eminence, Bernard Cardinal Law, Archbishop of Boston, promulgated particular law for the Archdiocese of Boston (“Archdiocese”). More specifically, the Archbishop promulgated particular law concerning the Sacrament of Confirmation (“Confirmation”), including the school grade for age of receiving Confirmation, the length of the program and the necessary content for Confirmation preparation.

In 2017, I formed a study committee to address the many considerations - theological, canonical, and practical - regarding our experience of Confirmation in the Archdiocese (“Committee”). This Committee, composed of those knowledgeable in theology and canon law, those teaching Confirmation, those representing ethnic communities, and pastors, met on a regular basis. The Committee consulted widely with other dioceses, discovered best practices, sent out surveys regarding the age for Confirmation, and considered possible updates and edits to our particular law on this subject. In summary, it was determined that 8th graders would benefit from receiving the grace of the sacrament at an earlier age, are less likely to have already moved away from a commitment to faith, have closer connections to their families, and have less to preoccupy them. Having Confirmation at this younger age would also allow pastors to explore new ways to evangelize high school students and accompany them on their journeys of discipleship.

The final recommendations of the Committee were submitted to me and to the Auxiliary Bishops and Episcopal Vicars of the Archdiocese just before the worldwide pandemic, Covid-19 struck in 2020. In May of 2023, I formed a new committee to look only at the question of the age and/or school grade for Confirmation (“Age Committee”). This committee was also composed of pastors; school principals; and those with experience and/or knowledge of teaching the faith, forming young disciples, canon law, and theology. The Confirmation Age Committee presented its work and findings at the Presbyteral Council Meeting on September 7, 2023. The consensus of the Age Committee and the recommendation before the Presbyteral Council was to move the age for Confirmation from the tenth/eleventh grades to the eighth grade and generally at age 13 or 14. The representatives of the various vicariates were asked to bring the matter of the age for Confirmation to the priests of their vicariates for discussion. At the November 2, 2023 Presbyteral Council meeting, further discussion was held from the feedback and questions of the priests of the Archdiocese. There was a general consensus that the age of Confirmation should be moved to 13 or 14.

Having considered the work and recommendations of the Committee and the Age Committee, and after their extensive and wide-ranging consultations, and in accord with canons 8, 29, 381 §1, and 391, I hereby decree and promulgate as particular law for the Archdiocese of Boston, that the age for Confirmation is at Grade 8 and age 13 or 14. This new age for Confirmation must be implemented by the parishes within three years of the effective date of this decree. Petitions for exceptions to this decree are to be addressed to the Secretary for Evangelization and Discipleship, who shall have the authority to admit exceptions. Parish schools may have their own Confirmation preparation, the implementation of which is the decision of the pastor, in

consultation with those responsible for the formation programs. The pastor determines the length of time for all Confirmation programs, which is to be no less than six months and no longer than two years.

This Decree shall be published and made known to each and every Pastor of the Archdiocese of Boston by electronic mail.

Any policy or particular law of the Archdiocese that is contrary to this Decree is hereby superseded, repealed, and abrogated. I hereby authorize the translation of this Decree into other languages, including, but not limited to, Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Vietnamese.

This Decree shall become effective at 12:01 AM on May 1, 2024.

Given at the Pastoral Center of the Archdiocese of Boston in Braintree, Massachusetts this 11th day of April, 2024.


Archbishop of Boston


Chancellor

