



# Christ the King Catholic Church

Church: 5711 SW 9<sup>th</sup> St. Des Moines, Iowa 50315-5006

Pastoral Center Offices: 820 Porter Ave Des Moines, Iowa 50315-5006

515-285-2888

[www.christthekingparish.org](http://www.christthekingparish.org)

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Our Lady of Guadalupe

12 December 2021

Dear Parents,

I need your help.

Put simply: if the bishop were coming for Confirmation tomorrow, I could not recommend that most of our young people received the sacrament. Given the behavior that I witnessed myself and that the adults who were around for the whole weekend have reported to me, many, if not most, of our candidates are simply not disposed to receive the sacrament.

Sacraments are not rewards for good behavior, nor are they some kind of graduation from catechism class. We have deliberately shifted our Confirmation preparation here from a classroom model in order to highlight this. The goal was to get more and more meaningful time with the young people. Many resisted the whole time. Several said explicitly that they did not want to be there, that they were only receiving the sacrament because their parents were making them, and they could not understand why were having them attend Mass in the course of the day, since they don't attend Mass regularly anyhow.

I need to make two things very clear:

- 1) Once your child is old enough to consent a sacrament, they have to consent to receiving the sacrament. In other words: **you can't force your child to be confirmed.** To do so against their will would be a grave sin, both of sacrilege against the sacrament, and contrary to charity with regard to your child.
- 2) **If your child is not attending Mass weekly, then they're simply not in a position to receive the sacrament.** And while a few of our young people can drive, most of them are still dependent on their parents or guardians to get to church, which means that if they're not getting here, the fault is not theirs alone.

Please don't misunderstand me. If we have a young person approach us here at the parish who says they really do want to be confirmed, but their family doesn't come to Mass regularly, I'm not going to refuse them—we'll just help them find a ride to Mass. But if you don't attend Mass regularly as a family, and if you haven't made clear that Mass attendance is a regular expectation for your older children—even if they can drive—then you can hardly blame them for not prioritizing the Mass. And if they don't understand what the Mass is and why it's important to be there, then I can't testify to the bishop that they're in a position to receive the sacrament.



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It would be hard for me to express the disappointment and regret that I have in our children and in having to write this, but I would rather delay a person's receiving the sacrament by a year or two in order to ensure that they really want to receive it, then risk harming their long-term relationship with Christ and the Church by making them feel that they were compelled to do something against their will.

I also want to express my regret to those young people and their families who take this all very seriously. Obviously, this is not directed towards you, though I do encourage you to talk to your kids about what happened on the retreat. I've worked with young people for a long time, as has our whole team, and I do not have unreasonable expectations. I know that kids get squirrely and have a hard time paying attention during talks. But they spent no more time here that Saturday than they do at school five days a week, and they had a harder time keeping quiet and being respectful during Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament than do the second graders in our school. To be frank, most of those second graders are in a better position to be confirmed right now than some of our sophomores.

Given that the requirements for Confirmation here are already so minimal, I'm going to insist on one more:

**By December 31<sup>st</sup> at midnight I expect a letter written by each student who intends to receive the sacrament of confirmation this spring. In that letter they need to tell me: 1) If they want to be Confirmed; 2) If so, why they want to be confirmed; and 3) If their behavior has not shown their readiness up till now, what they're going to change between now and then.**

These letters can be sent by email, but should be addressed to me, Father McManus, and sent to: [fr.mcmanus@christthekingparish.org](mailto:fr.mcmanus@christthekingparish.org).

Please take time during these Advent and Christmas days to talk to your kids about what's most important: to you, to them, and to us as a Church. And, as always, if you need any assistance at all with this, we're here. I want to help. But I also have to be honest.

Yours faithfully in Christ,

Fr. PJ McManus