

## Age of Confirmation: Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the new age for when someone can be Confirmed?

Over the next several years, every parish/pastorate in the Archdiocese of Baltimore will shift from their typical age of Confirmation (typically between grades 8-10) to **a universal norm of age 9 (around grade 4) as the standard earliest age of Confirmation**. Once fully implemented, Confirmation at age 9 will be considered standard practice, and all of our parish and pastorate programs will be built around 9 being the standard age. As is the case now, if someone does not choose to be Confirmed at the common age, Confirmation formation and preparation will always be available to those individuals who choose to participate later in their life (i.e., as older children, teens, or adults).

### When and how will the age change be implemented?

The current 2024-2025 Confirmation cycle will continue as planned. However, beginning in fall 2025, an initial segment of parishes/pastorates will begin implementation according to plans that reflect the needs of the local community. This first set of parishes/pastorates (“Wave 1”) are working with the Archdiocesan Office of Family, Youth, and Young Adult Ministry to develop these plans. This first set of parishes/pastorates will have completed implementation and will offer Confirmation at age 9 as the standard by the spring of 2028. Other parishes/pastorates will begin implementation in future sets (“Wave 2” in 2026-2027 and “Wave 3” in 2027-2028), and then will have 3 years to complete implementation. Thus, every parish in the Archdiocese of Baltimore will celebrate Confirmation at age 9 as a standard – some *as early as spring 2026 but all no later than spring 2030*.

### Does this change affect Order of Christian Initiation for Adults (formerly known as RCIA) adapted for Children/Teens?

No. Children over the age of 7 who have not been baptized and express a desire to enter the Catholic Church will still go through the OCIA process and receive all three Sacraments of Initiation (*Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist*) according to the Catechumenate model as is currently the practice of the Church.

### What role will my Catholic School have in preparing young people for the sacrament?

In the Archdiocese of Baltimore, preparation for all Sacraments takes place in the context of the parish/pastorate. While our Catholic schools provide an excellent environment for growing in faith, preparation for and celebration of the Sacraments (*particularly First Reconciliation/Penance, First Communion/Eucharist, and Confirmation*) will continue to be the responsibility of pastor and parish leadership, in partnership with parents and families. Catholic school religion/theology classes will continue to supplement and amplify the formation provided by parishes/pastorates.

### Are 9-year-olds mature enough to be Confirmed?

In short: yes. Some of the confusion stems from misunderstandings of the theology of Confirmation.<sup>1</sup> For example:

- Confirmation is truly about one’s **openness to the work of the Holy Spirit**, not about how much one knows about the faith. Nine-year-olds are not just capable of this openness but are often particularly receptive.
- Many people feel Confirmation is about “becoming an adult in the faith” (similar to a Catholic version of a bar or bat mitzvah), but that is not accurate.<sup>2</sup> **Confirmation enables one to be a witness for Christ**, and the lives of the Saints show us that young disciples are some of the most effective witnesses of all.
- Confirmation is not a choice that a person makes to “confirm” his or her faith as they enter adulthood – it is **God’s action of sealing and fully unleashing the Holy Spirit already present in that person through baptism**.
- **Confirmation is a Sacrament of Initiation not a graduation. Baptism, Confirmation, and First Eucharist mark the beginning of our journey** to understand the ever-unfolding mystery of God’s work in our lives. Some consider Confirmation a “graduation” of sorts, marking the end of formal catechesis, and that is not the case. Faith formation is a lifelong adventure! This change makes that theological reality even more clear.

### Does a younger Confirmation age keep individuals and families more engaged in their faith?

When implemented in tandem with an intentional focus on *how* we form children and parents in lifelong faith, Confirmation at an earlier age can transform the way families experience formation. By adjusting the standard age, the Church may reclaim the true nature of the Sacrament: a gift to be shared and an invitation to discipleship, fostered with ongoing catechesis and accompaniment at every stage, especially during the immediate post-Confirmation years.

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<sup>1</sup> See the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1302-1303.

<sup>2</sup> In fact, Roman Catholic bishops in the U.S. can set the normative time for Confirmation in their diocese at any age between the “age of discretion” (7) and the later teen years. Eastern Rite Catholics confirm infants at the time of baptism!