



The Restored Order of the Sacraments of Initiation: *Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist*

A Brief History

During the first five hundred years or so of the history of the Roman Catholic Church (and still today in the Eastern Rite Catholic Churches), the Sacraments of Christian Initiation were celebrated in this sequence: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. It was almost always the case that the three Sacraments were celebrated together at the same time, even with infants.

In 1910 Pope Pius X invited young children to Holy Communion with the one requirement that they be able to distinguish ordinary bread from the consecrated bread at Mass. This change had one drawback: Confirmation as a Sacrament of Initiation was lost.

Why the Restored Order at this point in time?

The Vatican II call for a restoration of the catechumenate and the post-Vatican II revision of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults support and mandate the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation in their original order. This has given dioceses the opportunity to consider the possibility of restored order for all who are celebrating the Sacraments of Initiation, including children baptized and catechized in the Catholic faith.

The principle for restoration to the original order is clear: Baptism gives us entry into the Christian life, Confirmation seals that belonging, and Eucharist celebrates it, uniting us to the heavenly feast that continues forever. The restored order helps us recognize that sharing in the Eucharist completes our initiation into the Body of Christ, the Church.





How is the Restored Order celebrated?

The Sacraments of Confirmation and First Holy Communion are both celebrated at the same Mass. Confirmation is celebrated after the homily. This emphasizes the integral unity of the Sacraments of Initiation, with Eucharist as the culmination of Christian Initiation (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1212, 1275, and 1322).

Isn't Confirmation a Sacrament of maturity that should be celebrated after First Holy Communion?

Although this is what many Catholics understand the Sacrament of Confirmation to be, Confirmation is actually the completion of Baptism through the fullness of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Celebrating Confirmation between the Sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist better expresses its role as the completion of Baptism.

It is also good to note that the maturity required for receiving any of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation is only what is age-appropriate.

Is it wrong to be confirmed at a later time after celebrating First Holy Communion?

No. The Church has many ways of celebrating the mysteries of God's love in the Sacraments. However, the *National Directory for Catechesis* 36A states "Christian initiation is celebrated in Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist."

The Eucharist is the culmination of a person's Christian initiation, not Confirmation. Theologically, the gift of the Holy Spirit given in all its fullness at Confirmation best prepares one to receive First Holy Communion, and thus to be most fully joined to the Body of Christ.

What about First Penance and Reconciliation?

Although Penance and Reconciliation is not a Sacrament of Initiation, preparation for the celebration of the Sacrament will be offered separate from preparation for the celebration of the restored order of the Sacraments of Confirmation and First Holy Communion.