

Well that's Different:

A New Approach to Confirmation Preparation at Holy Name of Jesus

I'd like to think I'm good at grilling chicken and to be honest, sometimes I do an okay job. But a few weeks ago was not one of those times. My wife, Alicia, and I had our friend Jesse over for dinner so I went to my go-to meal, grilled chicken. After Jesse took his first bite, he said it, "Well that's different." Sure enough, the chicken was different. Actually, it was gross. I failed to cook it all the way. Yuck. Minnesotans are famous for this - when we don't like something, or something feels foreign, we sometimes default in true Minnesota fashion to saying, "Well that's different."

As we approach Confirmation preparation this coming year, there no question, it is going to feel and look a little different. But unlike that chicken, we believe it's going be a very good thing. Holy Name of Jesus will continue to offer preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation that is life changing, transformative, and applicable to everyday life. This year we will:

- Transition from a two year preparation program to one that isn't tied to a grade level.
- Place greater emphasis on retreat experiences.
- Affirm the primary influence and importance of parents in the faith lives of their teens.

We believe these changes are necessary for three reasons:

- 1.) Confirmation is not something to be completed or to graduate from
- 2.) Retreats at HNOJ have an incredible success rate in inspiring our young people to be and engage as disciples
- 3.) In almost all cases, the single greatest influence on the faith life of a teen, is the parent.

Beginning not an End

First, The majority of students confirmed in the Catholic Church today stop attending Mass following their Confirmation. The Sacrament of Confirmation was never intended to be an end. Confirmation strengthens believers to witness to, spread, and defend the faith. (CCC 1303) This new approach will allow teens to be Confirmed when they have shown they are ready, and desire to be confirmed, not just when they have completed all the requirements. Most teens will begin Confirmation preparation following their 8th grade year and be confirmed at the end of their 10th grade year.

Christ Centered Retreats

Second, among students involved in the life of the Church following Confirmation, nearly all of them attended a retreat type experience that was a weekend or longer. Pope Francis, in his recent encyclical puts it this way, "The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ, joy is constantly born anew (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 1)." It is impossible to be a disciple without first encountering the person of Jesus Christ. Retreats are excellent at creating these moments of encounter and allowing teens, and adults, to step back from the chaos of life, and meet and respond to a God who loves them unconditionally.

Parent Connected

Third, studies have shown that the faith practices of a young adult nearly always mimic the faith practices of their parents. With the use of a groundbreaking youth ministry curriculum called YDisciple (ydisciple.org) parents will be allowed to engage simultaneously in every teaching our young people will hear on a weekly basis. We believe this will be an invaluable tool in equipping parents to share with their teens, their love of Jesus Christ and His Church.

Finally, part of this new structure is the introduction of First Sundays and two new retreats. First Sundays will feature some of the best Catholic youth speakers from around the country, music by our LifeTeen band, and transformational prayer that will inspire and invite our teens into a deeper relationship with Christ. These nights will be unforgettable. If you have questions, would like to get involved, or join our team in helping our teens in becoming disciples, you can reach me at klacroix@hnoj.org or 763.746.8190.

What's Next? How Do I Sign Up?

For Teens Who Completed Confirmation Year 1 in 2013-2014:

Step 1: Register for SH CREW (hnoj.org/shcrew)

Step 2: Register for Confirmation Prep (hnoj.org/crewconfirmation)

Step 3: View Confirmation checklist. (hnoj.org/crewconfirmation)

Step 4: Attend Parent/ Student Meeting on September 7th @ 7:00pm.

For Incoming 9th Graders:

Step 1: Register for SH CREW (hnoj.org/shcrew)

Step 2: View HNOJ Confirmation checklist. (hnoj.org/crewconfirmation)

Step 3: Attend Parent/ Student Meeting on September 7th @ 7:00pm.