



Diocese of Buffalo

Department of Lifelong Faith Formation

A member of the Division for Evangelization and Catechesis

Confirmation & Beyond

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“Congratulations! You received your Confirmation...now sign up to do something!” We don’t use those exact words when we speak to our young people after they have received the sacrament of Confirmation, but often that’s how our words translate to them. Catechetical leaders should be excited for our newly Confirmed youth and we want them to become involved in the life of our parish. However, many times our first instinct is to plug them into a ministry where they can perform tasks, but perhaps we are challenged to help them grow more deeply in faith in other ways.

We can fall into a trap that if we can just get newly Confirmed young people to become lectors, musicians, ushers, or involved in any of the many liturgical or parish ministries that we’re helping them stay connected. The rationale is that by *involving* them in the Sunday liturgy, it will automatically translate into them being *engaged* in their faith. However, this is not always the case. Simply inviting young people to volunteer in a parish ministry will not automatically lead to young people becoming engaged in a life of discipleship.

For adolescents receiving the sacrament of Confirmation, the completion of initiation into the Church takes place at the Confirmation liturgy. It’s only then they become fully initiated members of the People of God. A lot happens in the Confirmation liturgy, which means there is much to unpack and examine – but, the ‘program’ is over! Are there ways we can create time and opportunities for our newly Confirmed to prayerfully consider more deeply what it means to be member of the Body of Christ and enter into the mystery that they received with the celebration of their sacramental liturgy.

For those familiar with the RCIA, the time immediately following the reception of the sacraments of initiation is the period of Mystagogy—an **essential** phase that is spent on deepening the newly initiated person’s appreciation for the sacramental life. Mystagogical catechesis is founded on the principle that as one lives out the sacraments, they come to experience a fuller, more profound, more personal and communal meaning of them. This essential phase of Mystagogy is often a missing in our youths experiences, but can act as a game changer if implemented.

Before we consider *involving* our newly Confirmed in various liturgical and parish ministries, we must first assist them examine what they have received so as to actively *engage* them as followers of Christ. “What did I receive with the sacrament of Confirmation?”, “How has the sealing of the Holy Spirit upon my soul changed me?”, “What does this all mean for me as a disciple?”, “How am I being called to witness and to bring the light of the Gospel to every corner of the world?” etc. When done right, Mystagogy assists newly Confirmed young people in developing the interior dispositions that are necessary for discipleship.

If we can place the emphasis on cultivating the proper interior characteristics of discipleship that awaken and alert hearts, minds, and souls to the mystery of Christ's sacrificial love, then we will just not create mere volunteers involved in a liturgical or parish activity. We will, with the help and grace of the Holy Spirit, create future saints that will grace our liturgical and parish ministries with the presence of Christ and abundant blessings.

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