

MEATH DIOCESAN OFFICE



September 2026

Dear Candidates for Confirmation,

As you may know, each September I write to the candidates for Confirmation in the Diocese and I also send a recording to them through their school. The purpose of the letter and the recording is to assist in the preparation for your Confirmation next Spring. I hope that you will be able to share this letter and that recording with your family at home because preparation for Confirmation involves you, your school, your family and your parish.

You will have received the date of the Confirmation ceremony from your school already. I know too that many family members are anxious to have the date early so that they can make preparations and travel arrangements. Preparation is always important because without preparation, we don't succeed or do as well as we could!

There are a few points that remain the same each year.

The first task is to ask you to give some thought to the name which you will take for your Confirmation. As you know, there is a tradition of candidates for Confirmation taking a new Christian name. This name must be Christian and should be the name of a Saint or the Christian name of a family member who inspired you in the Christian life. That point is important. It must be a Christian name. It would not make any sense to have a name that is not Christian for Confirmation!

Many candidates take the name of a grandparent that they were or are close to or that of another family member. Others take a Saint's name. Many of the Saints are chosen and invoked for particular reasons. Some names are popular, Saint Anthony, who is the Patron Saint of things that are lost, Saint Lucy, the Patron Saint of eye problems, Saint Sebastian, the Patron of athletes, Saint Cecilia, the Patron Saint of musicians and Saint Gobnait, the Patron Saint of bee keepers appear frequently. There is a good website, <https://catholicsaints.info/>

where you can search through saints that might be of help to you. I cannot confirm candidates with a name that is not Christian so do put some time into choosing a suitable name. Remember you are choosing the name of a holy person who inspires you and someone whose intercession and support you can call on when you need to as you grow older. That is an important point.

As you know, you must also choose a sponsor. A sponsor is someone who is already confirmed, who is over sixteen years of age, who is not your parent or guardian and is someone who has faith, practices their faith and would be a support to you in your own faith and as you go through your teenage years. Some candidates have chosen grandparents, uncles, older brothers or sisters and family friends. Your sponsor should be someone who is kind to you and will support you and who, with your parents or guardians, will also help you to practice your faith and inspire you by their actions. Someone too that you can trust and confide in during the years ahead and someone who will look out for you. That is important too. I look forward to meeting your sponsor with you at the Confirmation ceremony.

You may also have heard about the Confirmation pledge. This is an optional pledge that many young people take at their Confirmation to abstain from alcohol and drugs. As you know, there are many temptations for young people like yourselves to take alcohol and other substances which can harm or even destroy life. The pledge is a promise to stay away from these until one is eighteen years old and it is also a way of asking the Lord's support in helping you to stay away from these things. I would ask you to discuss the pledge at school with your teachers and at home with your parents. Too many young people like yourselves have been hurt by alcohol and drugs. I know that over the past few years, many parents and grandparents have been very supportive to young people like yourselves who take the pledge. It is an option, but I do recommend it. All I am asking is that you would carefully consider it at this time. The pledge will do you no harm. Alcohol and drugs will.

These are points that I make each year to young people like yourselves who are preparing for Confirmation. Each year, I also add a more topical theme. The choice this year is rather easy. Pope Leo gave an excellent talk to young people from the Diocese of Genoa in Italy who visited Rome as part of their preparations for their Confirmation last May. During his talk to them, Pope Leo offered a number of thoughts which are also relevant to you as you prepare for your own Confirmation. I thought I would share them with you.

The first point that Pope Leo mentioned was that Confirmation gives an enthusiasm and the strength to follow Jesus, to say 'Yes' to him and to follow him courageously. That is true for you too. It can be difficult for young people like yourselves to follow Jesus. Indeed, many things seem to lead us away from Jesus. Confirmation, especially when you prepare well for it, gives that courage and strength. Of course, that following of Jesus must involve prayer and attending Mass and the Sacraments but is also reassures us of the help and presence of Jesus in our lives.

Pope Leo made another point which is also true. He said to those young people from Genoa that there is another aspect that is rather sad. 'Sometimes, when the bishop confers Confirmation, the gift of the Holy Spirit, you never see the young people again. They disappear from the Parish!'

That is why he asked the young people to pray for the gift of perseverance, one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. He asked them to persevere in the life of faith because Jesus wants to walk with them. He added that he hoped that the young people for Confirmation would be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, that they would persevere in the faith and that they would return to their parishes. He added that we do not live our faith alone, we live it together and forming bonds of friendship and community is a way of living our perseverance as disciples of Jesus. He said it was important that they would make this commitment, this promise to the Lord and that those who were to be confirmed would continue as His friends, His disciples and His missionaries.

As you prepare for your confirmation in the coming weeks and months, can I also ask you to read and reflect on Pope Leo's advice both at home and at school. Confirmation marks your full membership of the Church. It is a promise that the Lord walks with you and that God's Holy Spirit accompanies and guides you so that you are never alone. Ask yourself what difference Confirmation will make to you? How will you persevere in your faith in the weeks, months and years ahead? Perseverance is always the key to success. You know that already from other activities that you undertake, be they sports or even learning to play a musical instrument.

In Confirmation, your faith and membership of the Church is 'confirmed' and you take responsibility for your own faith in terms of praying, attending Mass and the Sacraments and

living the kind of life that God wants us to live. You could start that now! Pope Leo also said that *'The Church is the community of the friends of Jesus'*, and you become a closer friend of Jesus through Confirmation!

Friendships must be worked on. We can't take our friends for granted! Work on your friendship with Jesus. A good way of doing that would be to pray each night before bed and to attend Mass on Sundays. I know that your parents and grandparents would be able to support you in this task too.

One other thing. Confirmation is about what happens in the Church during the ceremony and about what happens afterwards in professing your faith. It is a celebration of you maturing as a Catholic and committing yourself to your faith.

I know that many of you will be having a celebration afterwards. That celebration does not have to be extravagant or expensive. Confirmation should not put pressure on anyone or make anyone feel unhappy. Don't put pressure on those at home in relation to the celebration or the party.

In the meantime, I hope you prepare well and I hope that these few words will offer encouragement to you as you prepare to have your faith confirmed. The most important preparation is prayer. We all need God's help from time to time. Now is the time to build that relationship!

I am looking forward to meeting you next Spring and hearing from you about your preparations and the research on your chosen Saint. In the meantime, when you are praying for those at home and your family, say a prayer for the priests in your parish and your teachers too. They are instrumental in your preparation! And don't forget the bishop either!

God be with you and I'll see you in the Spring.



Most Reverend Tom Deenihan.

Bishop of Meath.