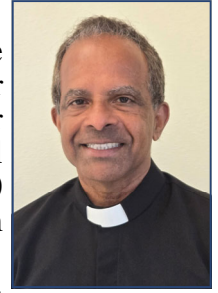


Dear Friends,

Over the next few weeks, our parish will experience something truly beautiful—grace unfolding in abundance. On the weekends of May 2 and May 9, across multiple Masses, our children will come forward to receive their **First Holy Communion**. And on May 17, our young people will be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit in **Confirmation** at the Cathedral of Christ the Light. Together, these celebrations will involve more than 150 families—150 stories of faith, hope, longing, and love. They are sacred moments in the life of our parish community.



When a child receives the Eucharist for the first time, something profound happens. The child encounters Jesus in a deep and meaningful way—an encounter that nourishes the soul in a way nothing else can. The Eucharist is not symbolic alone; it is the very presence of Jesus, who gives Himself to us in love. For our children, this first reception is like lighting a candle—a flame of faith that we pray will never be extinguished.

And Confirmation—so often misunderstood as a “graduation”—is in truth a **beginning**. It is the strengthening of what was begun at Baptism. The Holy Spirit comes not to conclude a journey, but to empower our young people to live their faith more deeply, more courageously, more intentionally in the world.

But here is the truth we must hold onto: **Sacraments are the starting point of a lifelong relationship with Christ.** That is why these moments matter so deeply—not only for the children and teens, but for all of us as a parish community.

I am reminded of a beautiful story from St. Thérèse of Lisieux. On the day of her First Communion, she described it not as something routine, but as a moment when “Jesus and I became one.” She had longed for that day with a childlike intensity, preparing her heart with love and simplicity. And after receiving the Eucharist, she said she felt an overwhelming peace and closeness to God—something that shaped her entire life of holiness.

One of the most meaningful parts of Confirmation is when each candidate chooses a saint’s name. This is not just a tradition, but a personal and spiritual choice—a reminder that they are called to be saints themselves. As they learn about their chosen saint, they discover real stories of faith, struggle, courage, and trust in God. Whether inspired by St. Francis of Assisi, St. Teresa of Calcutta, or St. Thérèse of Lisieux, they are invited to see that holiness is possible in everyday life. The name they take becomes more than a symbol—it becomes a lifelong guide, encouraging them to grow in faith and to live the mission God has given them.



To our parents: you are the first teachers of the faith. What your children see in you—the way you pray, the way you love, the way you make room for God in your daily life—will shape their faith far more than anything we can do in a classroom.

To our parish community: these children and teens are not “someone else’s responsibility.” They are ours. We are called to create a Church where faith is welcoming, alive, visible, and contagious.

To our young people: what you are receiving is a gift beyond measure. Treasure it. Return to it. Let it shape who you become.

And today, I want to express my deep and heartfelt gratitude. To our catechists, who have given their time, energy, and love—often quietly and without recognition—thank you. You have not just taught lessons; you have formed hearts.

To our Faith Formation team, who have coordinated, guided, and supported this entire journey—thank you for your dedication, your patience, and your deep commitment to the mission of the Church.

And to our families—thank you for saying “yes.” Thank you for bringing your children, for making space for faith in a busy and demanding world.

And may we never forget: every First Communion, every Confirmation, is not just their moment— it is our moment as the Body of Christ.

~Fr. Paulson