



MEATH DIOCESAN OFFICE

10 October 2022.

Dear students,

You will have heard by now of your Confirmation date for next year. Due to the large number of parishes and schools in the Diocese, I will be starting Confirmations towards the end of January and continuing until May.

I hope that your preparation for Confirmation is going well at school, at home and in the parish. Confirmation is an important Sacrament and it marks both your maturity as young Christians and also your willingness to take responsibility for your own faith. That will be the theme for Confirmations in the Diocese next year. While it is a time of celebration for family and friends, it is a religious celebration and I write to ask you to concentrate, by way of preparation, on the religious meaning of Confirmation. At this stage, while Confirmation is some months away, I would like to encourage you to undertake the four tasks that I ask of students each year.

The first of these is to think about what name 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. Many students take the name of a Grandparent that they were or are close to or another family member. Other students take a saint's name. Many of the saints are chosen and invoked for particular reasons. For example, in the past year, I have met students who took Anthony after Saint Anthony, who is the Patron Saint of things that are lost, Lucy after Saint Lucy, the Patron Saint of eye problems, Saint Sebastian, the Patron of athletes and Saint Cecilia, the patron saint of musicians. There is a good website, www.catholicsaints.info where you can search through saints that might be of help to you. I cannot confirm students with a name that is not Christian so do put some time into choosing a suitable name.

As you know, you must also choose a sponsor. A sponsor is someone who is already confirmed, who is over sixteen years of age and is someone who has faith and would be a support to you in your own faith and as you go through your teenage years. Some students have chosen grandparents, uncles, bigger brothers or sisters and family friends. Your sponsor should be someone who is kind to you and will support you and who will also help you to practice your faith and inspire you by their actions. 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 students 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 also is 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 also at home with your parents. It is optional but I would encourage it. 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 students like yourselves who take the pledge.

Confirmation is a Sacrament and I would ask you to spend some time on the religious nature of Confirmation. 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! A good way of preparing for Confirmation would be to say a prayer each night and to attend Mass on Sundays. I know that your parents and grandparents would be able to support you in this task too. The readings for Confirmation this year talk of there being a time for everything and moving from childhood to maturity. Confirmation marks your maturing in the faith and taking responsibility for your own faith; for attending Mass and praying. Without that intention, Confirmation has no meaning.

It looks likely that costs will increase this Winter so try to be sensible with whatever celebration that you will have later. Confirmation is what happens in the church, not afterwards! Confirmation should not put pressure on anyone or make anyone feel unhappy. During COVID, many families had an enjoyable celebration at home with grandparents and sponsor.

I suggest the above to help you to make the most of your Confirmation so that it will be a joyful celebration of your faith and will be a happy memory and have meaning for you as you grow older. I look forward to meeting you next Spring but in the meantime, when you pray, remember those who are suffering at this time, particularly as a result of poverty and the Ukrainian crisis.

With every good wish and blessing,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom Deenihan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left and then curves back up towards the start of the name.

Most Reverend Tom Deenihan,
Bishop of Meath.