

MEATH DIOCESAN OFFICE



5 October 2023.

Dear students,

At this time of the year, I usually write to the students who will be receiving Confirmation next year. Given that we are now in October, I am sure you are preparing already and turning your thoughts to your Confirmation. This letter is to encourage your preparation and to make a few suggestions that, I hope, will be useful.

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. Practicing your faith and living as Jesus would want us to live takes courage and Courage is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that you receive at Confirmation. Courage will be the theme for Confirmations in the Diocese next year.

While Confirmation is rightly 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 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 must be the name of a Saint or the Christian name of a family member who inspired you in the Christian life. 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. Another website, www.catholic.org/saints/patron has a list of all the patron saints, their lives and what they are patron of. Do look it up! I cannot confirm students with a name that is not Christian so do put some time into choosing a suitable name. Besides, it is good to have a Patron Saint whose help we can seek from time to time.

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 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, who will support you, who you can turn to 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.

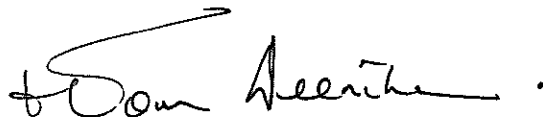
You may also have heard about the Confirmation pledge. This is an optional pledge that many students take at their Confirmation to abstain from alcohol and drugs. As you know, there are many temptations for young people like yourselves to take alcohol and other substances which can harm or even destroy 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 by praying, attending Mass and the Sacraments and by 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 am sure your parents and grandparents would be able to support you in this task too. The readings for Confirmation this year remind us of the courage that the early disciples received at Pentecost or the first Confirmation. Confirmation marks your maturing in the faith and taking responsibility for your own faith. This necessitates courage but without that intention, Confirmation has no meaning. I pray that you will receive the courage to live good and holy lives at Confirmation next year.

I would also ask you to be sensible with whatever celebration that you will have after Confirmation. Confirmation is what happens in the church, not afterwards! Confirmation should not put pressure on anyone or make anyone feel unhappy. In many ways, a celebration is about who you are with, not what you have!

I suggest the above to help you make the most of your Confirmation so that it will be a joyful celebration of your faith 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 and less well off at this time.

With every good wish and blessing,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Deenihan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Most Reverend Tom Deenihan,
Bishop of Meath.